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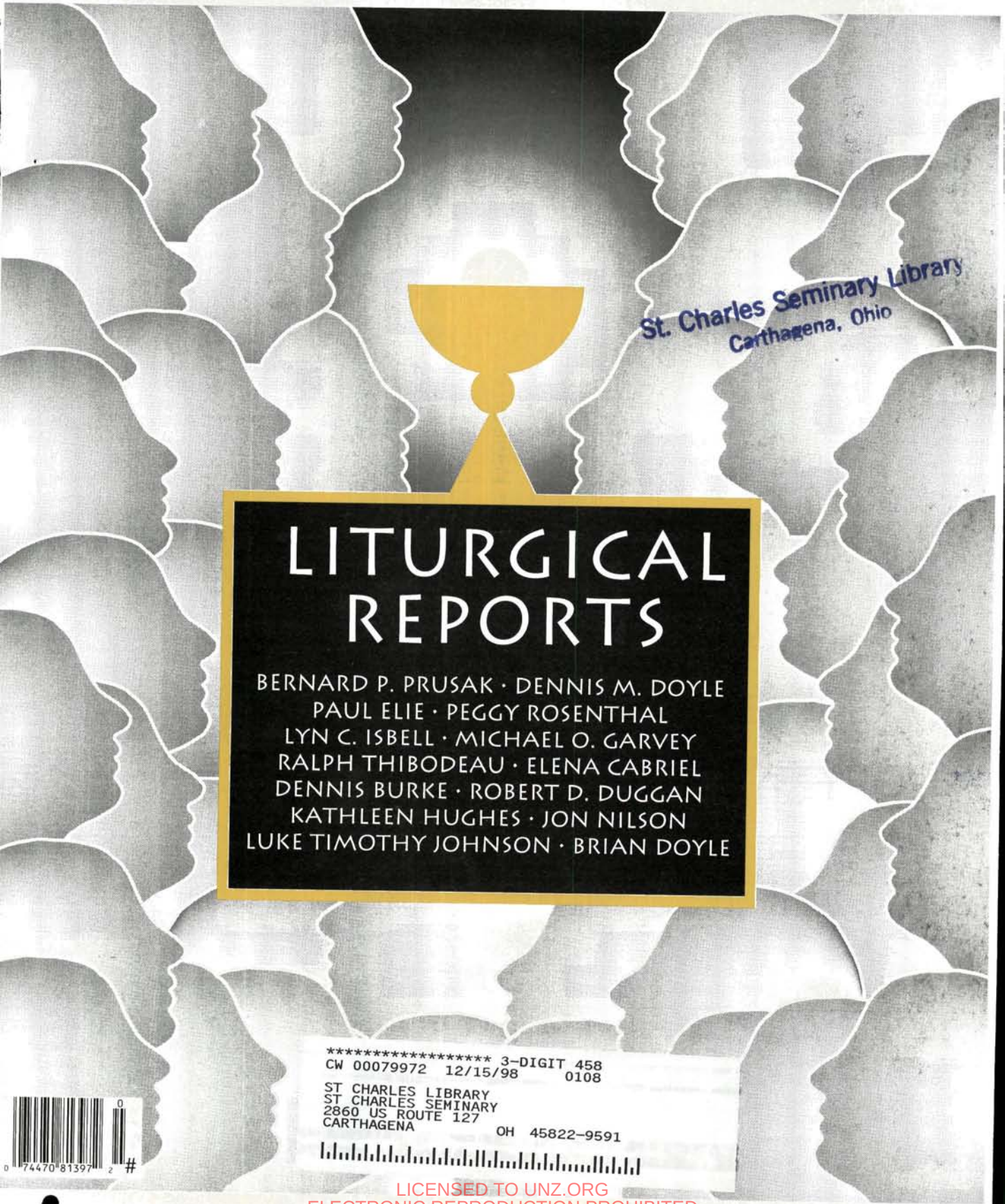

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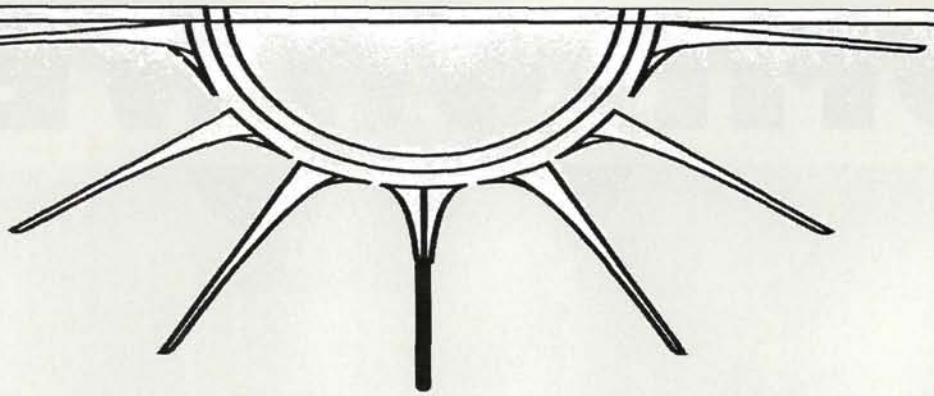

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A Theological and Pastoral Conference on the Mission of the Laity

May 6-8, 1998

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COMMONWEAL

January 30, 1998 / Volume CXXV, Number 2

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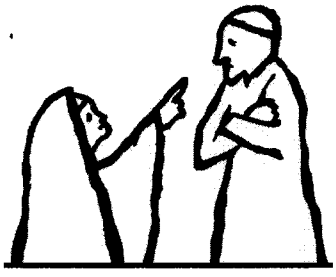

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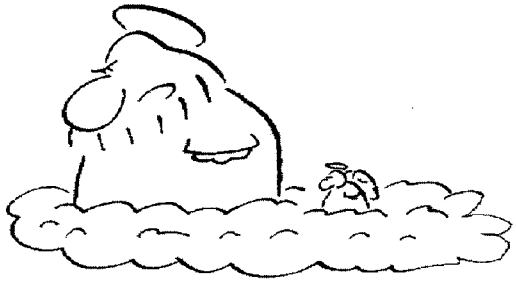

"I don't remember ordaining any *of that stuff!"*

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To the Editors

Control freaks

All praise to John Garvey: He always invites one to think, and his cogent insights regularly deny one's comforting clichés. He has done it again in "The Seven McCaugheys" [December 19, 1997] by exposing the links among fertility technology, genetic manipulation, the death penalty, abortion, and assisted suicide under the rubric of "control." It's too bad limited space prevented his pointing out how widely the cult of control has extended its power over the American (and Catholic) psyche in matters less mortal but scarcely less destructive. Day by day, electronic and print advertising document the melancholy American obsession with controlling/suppressing every random, discomfiting, painful feature of being alive. The bathroom medicine cabinet tells a similar story, with less effort.

ROBERT OSTERMANN
Tempe, Ariz.

What 'DNR' means

The article "You Do Understand about DNR?" [November 21, 1997] misrepresents DNR and presents several morally troublesome moves in the medical care of the author's mother. We read that a "DNR document" directs caregivers to take no heroic measures, including use of a respirator, and can mandate withdrawal of nutrition and hydration. In fact, DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) applies only to emergency CPR efforts after a cardiopulmonary arrest. No other treatments are affected. Other types of advance directives address other issues, such as respirators and nutrition and hydration.

A legally competent and cognitively intact woman stated repeatedly: "No more tests!" A daughter promised, "Don't worry, Mom, they won't." Yet physicians, with the daughter's permission, continued the invasive tests for weeks. One wonders what legal or moral reasons supported the invasion of her body against her wishes.

When the patient became temporarily confused, physicians appropriately asked her daughter to act as her proxy. Apparently, however, they failed to tell her that a proxy's first responsibility is not to make decisions based on what she thinks is good for the patient but to convey the patient's wishes whenever they are known.

The author worries that she might have caused her mother's death if she had consented to a DNR order. This is a terrible worry but morally needless for three reasons. First, declining CPR is ultimately a decision for a capable patient, not family, to make. Second, declining CPR and other burdensome tests and treatments is best not conceived as causing death, something the Vatican Declaration on Euthanasia, the AMA Code of Medical Ethics, and the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Quill* v. *Vacco* have made clear. Third, the crucial moral question is not whether our actions or omissions play a causal role in someone's death, but whether we have compelling reasons for pursuing actions or omissions when we know death may or will result.

Moral evaluation in this kind of story hinges on whether imposing invasive interventions on a patient when "medical specialists and staff continued to offer no hope of recovery" and the patient herself did not want them is morally reasonable. A good intention—the desire to save life—does not alone indicate a morally sound decision. Neither does a happy ending; poor moral decisions sometimes have good outcomes and good moral decisions sometimes have bad outcomes.

While no one not present can make judgments about decisions in a particular story, as long as patients have not lost the capacity to understand the important aspects of their condition and their medical options, and have made their wishes clear, virtue will normally lie in efforts to inform, explain, discuss, recommend, encourage, argue, but never to coerce and to force.

Human freedom is a dangerous reality because sometimes people make poor choices, even about life itself. But the Gospels never depict Christ forcing people to accept his way of gaining eternal life: an example families and physicians might consider before forcing anyone to accept their ways of prolonging mortal life.

RAYMOND J. DEVETTERE
Boston, Mass.

The writer is the author of Practical Decision Making in Health Care Ethics: Cases and Concepts *(Georgetown University Press).*

The writer replies:

As one who claims no expertise in medical matters, I must apologize for the technical error in my reference to the "DNR directive." My purpose was to describe the course of a health-care crisis on the basis of personal experience. From that perspective, I am qualified to respond to at least some of Mr. Devettere's concerns.

First, my mother, whom Devettere describes as "legally competent and cognitively intact," did not "repeatedly" refuse further tests; once in a two-month period hardly constitutes insistence. Nor was a woman frightened, disoriented, and oxygen-deprived likely to qualify as "cognitively intact."

Next, it is difficult to comprehend how one human being can make profound life decisions for another on the basis of perceived "wishes." When someone says "ought to" but never follows through, a decision of sorts has already been made. My mother did not sign the advance directives when her lawyer offered the option; she did not sign when the hospital admissions office gave her the required form. Even after enduring the ordeal I described, my mother *never* signed such a document. Yet the medical staff made many attempts to convince me that I should sign on her behalf. Finally, I will add that the "no hope of recovery" theory

(Continued on page 29)

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Liturgical confusion

Controversy need not be a symptom of institutional weakness, decay, or even disunity; it is often a sign of intellectual vitality and passionate attachment. Much depends on how the parties involved in any dispute conduct themselves. Are they willing to listen to one another? Or do they condemn first and ask questions later? Do they presume the best about each other's motives? Or the worst? Even rarer, are they open to the possibility of learning something, even from their critics?

A textbook example of how *not* to engage others is currently being provided by Mother Angelica, founder of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), and by Adoremus, the Society for the Renewal of Catholic Liturgy. On television last November, Mother Angelica accused Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles of denying the doctrine of the Real Presence. Mother Angelica, a kind of Rush Limbaugh in a wimple, even went on to urge Mahony's flock to deny their bishop "obedience."

The source of Mother Angelica's "I will not serve" was her evidently hasty and uncomprehending reading of "Gather Faithfully Together: A Guide to Sunday Mass," a pastoral letter in which Mahony offered a "vision of a parish Sunday Eucharist" as he hoped it would be celebrated in the jubilee year 2000. The burden of the letter was Mahony's recognition, in the words of the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, that "something more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and lawful celebration" if the liturgy is to enlist the active participation of all. Failing to understand the "conversational" tone of the letter and overlooking its explicit affirmation of the traditional understanding of transubstantiation, Mother Angelica imagined that "the cardinal of California is teaching that it is bread and wine before the Eucharist and after the Eucharist." Mahony had been accused of heresy on national television, and he demanded a retraction and an apology. He received a half-hearted *obsequium* in which Mother Angelica characterized the pastoral letter as "confusing," criticizing its emphasis on the assembly "rather than the Eucharist."

Mahony's pastoral letter is, admittedly, very long, somewhat repetitive, and as much pep talk as guideline. But doctrinally venturesome? Hardly. Still, Adoremus, whose executive committee features self-styled "orthodox" Catholics Joseph Fessio, S.J., and Helen Hull Hitchcock, has rallied to Mother Angelica's defense with a 5,300-word statement (what is the connection between liturgy and prolixity?) challenging Mahony's vision of liturgical renewal. Mahony's pastoral letter, Adoremus divines, is "likely to increase the liturgical confusion already pervasive in the church."

As the report on the liturgy in this issue of *Commonweal* attests (beginning on page 9), Catholics from across the ideological spectrum have both great devotion to and understandable concerns about current liturgical practice. Real changes have been effected by the liturgical reform, and the complexity of eucharistic doctrine—it attempts to explain, after all, a profound mystery—can be daunting. A willingness to presume the good faith and *orthopraxis* of others would therefore seem appropriate. In short, where heterodox views are not asserted, they should

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not be imputed. Presumably even cardinals can be extended this courtesy.

As any fairminded reading of "Gather Faithfully Together" makes clear, Mahony's discussion of the distinct but complementary roles of assembly and priest, the nature of the eucharistic elements, the meaning of the eucharistic prayer, and the use of inclusive language, are uncontroversial. Only the most tendentious reading can conclude, as Adoremus incomprehensibly does, that the letter offers a "strikingly truncated theology of the Eucharist" and a "defective, functionalist view of the priesthood."

A desire to encourage the full participation of all Catholics in the liturgy—Mahony's stated goal—might seem naturally to begin with a proper regard for the assembly. The liturgical reform has reminded Catholics that the Eucharist is an act of the entire church, not something the priest "does." Consequently, a recognition of the assembly's liturgical authority need not be regarded as a move in a "horizontal" direction and the slighting of the liturgy's "vertical, or transcendent dimension," as Adoremus charges. Although present in the bread and wine in an exceptional way, Christ is also present in the assembly. Moreover, juxtaposing, as Adoremus does, the ideas of sacrifice and meal, priest and assembly, the so-called "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of the Eucharist, is itself a rather truncated understanding of the essentially dialectical nature of the Eucharist. All these elements exist in tension; they are not mutually exclusive.

Much of Adoremus's critique focuses on Mahony's alleged blurring of the liturgical roles of priest and assembly. In seeming to emphasize the priest as "presider," the cardinal's letter supposedly encourages an effort to cast the assembly as "co-celebrants." Although some popular misunderstandings about the priesthood should be a matter of concern, this specific charge is baseless. Nowhere does Mahony minimize the role or status of the ordained. More important, presiding in the assembly should not be seen as a denigration of the priest's sacerdotal powers. Rather, "Gather Faithfully Together" recognizes that priesthood finds its culmination and truest expression precisely in leadership of the worshiping community. Even the eucharistic prayer, after all, does not belong to the priest alone, but is the prayer of the whole assembly. Contrary to Adoremus's seeming longing for a return to the days when the distinction between priest and people was given exaggerated importance, the reformed liturgy returns us to a more venerable Catholic tradition that unites all the baptized in one act of sacrifice and remembrance.

"Who are the laity?" a bishop once condescendingly asked Cardinal Newman. "I answered," Newman recalled, "that the church would look foolish without them." As "Gather Faithfully Together" demonstrates, Cardinal Mahony shares Newman's sound instincts about the faithfulness and credibility of the laity. More than any conceivable shortcoming in Mahony's pastoral letter, it is the intemperate charges of Adoremus and Mother Angelica that increase "the liturgical confusion already pervasive in the church."

Ruling the Conversation

Advertising: One of the pillars of *Commonweal*'s financial semi-solidity is advertising. From time to time, we get complaints about specific ads we run, and from time to time we get out our policy and dust it off. Recent complaints about advertisements for conferences on homosexuality brought out the dust rag. We thought readers might be interested in knowing how we think about these matters.

Commonweal's working policy is to sell ad space to those who request it. On the one hand, we consider advertisers innocent until proven guilty; on the other, we do not consider that publishing an ad constitutes an endorsement by us. We feel strongly about this policy when it comes to "idea" advertising—for books, tapes, and conferences. Our reasons are both practical and principled.

Practical: It would be unrealistic for us to try to evaluate all the ideas that are directly or indirectly promoted through proposed advertisements. Could we read ahead of time all the books we advertise? And if we started refusing ads for ideas we disagree with, will readers assume that we agree with the ideas promoted in the ads we do accept? This strikes us as an impossible and self-defeating route to pursue.

Principled: Our readers are adults. It seems to us condescending to protect you from ideas we reject, and all too reminiscent of past unhappy practices of the Catholic church. We have our editorial space and our choice of articles to make clear, forcefully in many cases, where we stand, and our readers, we believe, know the difference between that and paid ads. And readers too can make their views known in our correspondence columns.

Would we reject some ads? Yes, and we have: ads that are in themselves hopelessly tasteless or tawdry, regardless of the merits of the advertised products; ads that, insofar as we can tell, are fraudulent (it is not always easy to detect this sort of thing until readers alert us); ads that directly urge actions (not ideas) that we consider immoral. We would not run an ad recruiting mercenaries or raising funds for the *contras* during the Nicaraguan conflict; we would not run an ad for an abortion clinic; we would not run ads for organizations carrying out anticlinic violence; we would not run incendiary ads urging discrimination against blacks, immigrants, women, gays, workers, evangelicals, etc.

Finally, we would certainly reject some ads even for ideas when we find the ideas indisputably and overwhelmingly immoral, for example, books that are unquestionably racist or that blatantly deny the Holocaust or justify torture or are pornographic. But here we would be careful to draw a wide boundary of what can be debated. Do we strongly reject much of the thrust of Herrnstein and Murray 's *The Bell Curve*? Yes. Would we refuse to advertise it? No. Would we advertise a seriously argued prochoice book or a thoughtful case for assisted suicide? We believe we would.

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Complaints we have received from both liberals and conservatives persuade us that in a world of political correctness, there are very few questions beyond debate. Often enough, these are the very questions that have raised more questions and are in search of further answers.

Correction In the December 5, 1997 issue, an editing error in the Last Word column led to an incorrect Internet address for The Bible Gateway. The correct address is : http://www.gospelcom.net/bible?

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

BAD ARGUMENTS

Twenty-five years after 'Roe'

Damn, damn, damn—to quote Rex Harrison playing Henry Higgins—I've let a friend persuade me to review a new book on abortion. Unfortunately, after thirty years, I can only echo Eliza Doolittle's "there's not a word I haven't heard."

Most of the time in these debates I seek common ground, but goaded by the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade* and recent rationalizations of partial-birth abortion, I'm going to give way to spleen. Here are some of the worst arguments on abortion I've ever heard—and to be fair about it, I include both sides. I'll maintain anonymity as to my sources; full documentation can be provided on request.

I'll start with a few of the awful arguments from prolife circles. Abortion is wrong, I've been told, because "There are little souls in heaven waiting to come down to earth and abortion refuses them a chance for life and happiness." Since I don't believe in the pre-existence of souls, I can hardly worry about frustrating yearnings to be incarnate. Nor am I moved by purported dialogues in which embryos, or "babies," are depicted as saying, "Please, mommy, please, don't abort me." This is a pitiable ploy, if not an outright pathetic fallacy. It also seems presumptuous to assume that difficult circumstances in life can be solved with the pious claim that "each baby is born with a loaf of bread tucked under its arm; God will provide." Obviously, certain folks on the prolife side can err in sentimental exaggeration or pathologies of hope.

Other problematic prolife arguments, made by a few extremists, are less forgivable, because they're dangerous. To identify abortion with murder, for instance, or with genocidal holocausts, is incendiary hyperbole that can trigger violence in the mentally unhinged. "Murder" in my understanding is constituted by a malicious and calculated intention to kill a human being recognized as such. And in genocidal "holocausts" the goal is to wipe out whole races, whole families, whole sects or tribes by any illegal or violent means. Legalized abortion on request is bad enough, as a dreadful practice of unjust killing, without rhetorically upping the ante.

"He said his first word today—'Yikes!'"

On the other hand, horrible prochoice arguments can be even harder to take. I've heard a lot of them in debates with both stars and footsoldiers of the radical feminist abortion "rights" movement. Abortion is said to be morally good because "Men have always killed, so why shouldn't women be able to?" Or, "Abortion is a sacramental moment for a woman." The sacredness referred to seems to be the woman's assertion of self in taking control of her life. Of course, to prolife ears this sounds just like Raskolnikov's act of killing that bothersome old woman in order to assert his freedom from conventional morality.

A self-identified Catholic in another abortion debate justified society's preservation of seals and eagles but refused protection to fetal life, since "humans are a renewable resource." You can always have another, and too many people in the world are having far too many. Another assertion was made that no woman's decision for abortion could ever be morally questioned. A dogma of gender infallibility, if you will.

More recently, I'm meeting New Age arguments for abortion. One beautiful young woman on a TV program assured me that it "was not her karma to be aborted," so presumably those who go down the tubes just don't have the right spiritual stuff. Another opponent tells me that "old souls," waiting to begin

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another cycle of reincarnation, are much too sophisticated to put up with the boring nine months in a dark confining womb, so they wait for birth to join up with their new bodies. Thus if you abort you really aren't doing any harm.

This fellow also claims that there are research studies that show that if a woman and her spiritual counselor convince a waiting soul that this is not a good time for her to have a child, a stillbirth can be induced— thereby solving problem pregnancies. This particular encounter made me renew my subscription to *The Skeptical Inquirer*, a magazine put out by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation for Claims of the Paranormal. Most of this crowd appear to be secular materialists, but they can be allies against junk science.

Back in the mainstream feminist pro-abortion movement I find an argument that plays down a woman's choice and focuses on the need for a woman's consent to pregnancy. If consent is absent, the woman has a right to kill in self-defense, just as she would against the assault of a full-grown person. The fetus is identified as an active aggressive agent; the operative image is fetus as rapist. Suggestions that a woman might complete her pregnancy and then offer the baby for adoption should be met with the counterargument that no one should ask a rape victim to wait until the rape is over before taking defensive action.

Pregnancy without consent is seen as a form of rape and slavery. Thus the state should permit and fund abortions so that every woman can be protected. After all, public tax money is used by the police and legal system to protect other citizens against other acts of aggression, invasion, and assault.

Needless to say, in this argument human biology counts for little. A woman's pregnancy has little to do with her fertility or with sexual intercourse, since it is only the active implantation of a fertilized ovum that causes a woman to become pregnant. (A rather truncated concept of causation operates here, that aptly matches the narrowed version of moral responsibility.) The fact that each woman's pregnancy is creating a unique new human life is also dismissed as irrelevant.

In this argument, women should emulate "the bad Samaritan" who does not allow altruism to be forced upon her. The emotions of maternal bonding and feelings of kinship are discounted because this approach is blind to the altruistic instincts of our common human nature. Only individual autonomous will, freedom, and control are exalted. Women should take up the macho virtues of self-defensive gunplay, "shooting aggressors in the stomach," if need be. Back to self-assertive sacraments of violence. "*Non serviam*," cries Stephen Daedalus, Joyce's hero (echoing Lucifer), and proceeds to smash out the lights. When the great refusals reign, dark destruction follows.

But like it or not, embryos are human, destroying human life is morally wrong, and humanity has to struggle against the violence of the jungle. We have less to fear from excesses of sentimental gush than from cold ideologies of autonomous control. □

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CELEBRATING MASS

Fourteen reports from the pews

Luke Timothy Johnson • Dennis M. Doyle • Bernard P. Prusak • Paul Elie
Peggy Rosenthal • Lyn C. Isbell • Michael O. Garvey • Ralph Thibodeau • Elena Cabriel • Dennis Burke
Robert D. Duggan • Kathleen Hughes • Jon Nilson • Brian Doyle

Introduction

To a remarkable degree, Catholics of all stripes cherish the Mass, judging it the most important expression of their faith, the place where their religious identity continues to be forged in the most distinctive ways. But exactly how well and how faithfully are we doing the Eucharist? And how do Catholics of diverse theological and ecclesiological views understand what it is the Eucharist does?

Opinions vary—wildly, and sometimes heatedly. In hopes of making a contribution to this often contentious debate, *Commonweal* asked fourteen correspondents to report on their participation in a typical Sunday Eucharist, and we asked them all to report on one Sunday in particular: last October 19, Mission Sunday (the readings: Isaiah 53:4, 10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45). The homilies, the music, the quality of reverence exhibited, even the churches' architecture were all fair game for comment. Did our correspondents' attendance at Mass on one typical Sunday make their faith more or less of a compelling reality in their lives? Above all, how faithfully did the liturgy make Christ present to those in attendance? In an anecdotal, but we trust not an entirely idiosyncratic fashion, we think these brief but informed reflections will help us better understand what American Catholics believe today.

Our fearless reporters went far and wide to get that story: from the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri in London, where the liturgical reforms of Vatican II seem to be little more than a nasty rumor, to one of California's first Spanish mission churches, to the quiet of a Catholic Worker house in Notre Dame, Indiana, to a bustling "megachurch" in Minneapolis where high-tech visual aids keep the congregation singing while gazing heavenward. They found that there is still a lot of stained glass and plaster statuary; still a good number of indifferent parishioners; a great deal of singing, some of it fitful; much decent but little inspiring preaching; and enough conflict among generations, immigrant groups, and ideological factions to keep sociologists employed for another millennium.

Why people go to church and what they get out of doing so are complicated questions. In imagining how the future will regard his desultory Manhattan congregation, Paul Elie issues a useful caution: "I thought of the 166 or so of us here today, and how we would be made over into people of our time and place, all our particularities falling away with the flesh, our doubts and misgivings and mutinous impulses smoothed out into generalities about modern American Catholics."

As Elie suggests, generalizations often miss the essence of religious motivation and belief. In reading these liturgical critiques, it would be inappropriate to make any hard or fast judgments about the participants; better to keep in mind the implicit vulnerability of people caught in the act of prayer. That does not mean all analysis should be foregone. One observation made by a number of contributors seems to merit some comment. On this point, Dennis Burke, reporting from California, describes the actions of the celebrant: "There was no doubt about his belief in the Real Presence, but his behavior said to me, 'This is meal more than sacrifice; horizontal more than vertical.'" Similarly, Brian Doyle notes how the word "community" was repeated seven times by the priest at his Portland, Oregon, church, while Kathleen Hughes, R.S.C.J., simply judges the Mass she attended "decidedly low church."

Our hunch is that the "vertical" or transcendent aspects of the Mass are more likely to be presumed than explicitly affirmed by most Catholics today. As the squeakiest wheel, it is the "horizontal" that gets most of the attention and much of the criticism. After thirty years of the "reformed" liturgy, have our understandings about the Eucharist shifted too far in a horizontal direction? On the basis of what our correspondents found, we could not say that they have. In fact, it is surprising how little "high" or "low," "horizontal" or "vertical" figure in the quality of the liturgical experiences they report. Still, the ways in which ecclesiology and theology shape each other are real, if subtle. Polls assessing Mass attendance and what Catholics believe about the Real Presence suggest some diminution of confidence, or at least some confusion, in the pews about the nature of the Eucharist.

As more than one of our correspondents reminds us, however, it is not we who judge the liturgy, but the liturgy that judges us. The Mass is where heaven and earth touch, where God makes himself present to his people, as Peggy Rosenthal so aptly puts it, on the "only plane that matters, where we are one Body."

Finally, what is most remarkable, and remarkably evident in the following pages, is how Catholics, despite their disputes and despite constantly falling short, continue to persevere, continue to "do this in memory of me."

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Atlanta, Georgia

Sacred Heart Church is downtown, with the SunTrust bank on one side and a "businessmen's hotel" recently restored for urban housing on the other. My geographical parish is also where I choose to worship. The French Romanesque building is one of the few in Atlanta with any age, so it is a historical monument, beautifully maintained by the second collection. The nineteenth-century piety displayed by paintings and windows and statues, or by the marble high altar with gilded tabernacle would not be everyone's taste. I'm not sure they're mine. But they are quietly harmonious, and the adaptations for the reformed liturgy have had to work around them, so that the simple wooden altar facing the people and the lector's podium seem part of a larger eclecticism.

I attend the 10:00 A.M. Mass together with a full and diverse assembly: old people and young (lots of babies), black, Oriental, Hispanic—the Atlanta spectrum—also socioeconomically, from stylish Buckhead matrons to folks a step or so above the street. It feels catholic, this diversity. In a city divided along all these lines, it is healing just being here.

Father Churchwell is the pastor. Trained by Benedictines, he has a good liturgical presence, speaking the words of the liturgy slowly, carefully, and meaningfully. I am here primarily because when he says the eucharistic prayer every syllable sounds as though understood and intended. He is a convert. He takes none of this for granted. The liturgy has spaces for praying in silence and there is never any sense of haste, yet Mass takes only an hour. One reason is that Churchwell's preaching is humble and unadorned, rarely going past seven minutes but always worth hearing.

Today the pastor is hoarse from the flu so the lay deacon preaches. A little shaky with the Gospel (Gentiles get confused with Galileans), he settles down to a thoughtful homily on the Christian life as a life of service (getting the point of the readings just fine), with specific reference to the parish's Vincent de Paul Society, AIDS ministry, and help to Atlanta's street people. A faithful interpretation of the Word of God.

The liturgy has a sense of formality, yet is also familiar and friendly. The small ceremonies (on other Sundays) of inducting new acolytes, commissioning catechists, and welcoming first communicants, are all simple and warm. Today the little boy and girl acolytes—in white robes and wooden crosses—are characteristically solemn and attentive, doing their business unobtrusively. The eucharistic ministers scramble to get the required number but administer both species to virtually all communicants with appropriate demeanor.

The church has a fine organ and a splendid organist. The well-trained choir is garbed in traditional choir robes. They take the lead in the ordinary (*Kyrie*, etc.), but are joined only raggedly by the congregation today—this is a less-familiar version. The people do join heartily in all verbal responses, the sung responsorial psalm and alleluia, as well as the hymns taken from the 1990 *Collegeville Hymnal*. Nobody rehearses the congregation, and nobody here seems to miss the busywork of rehearsal and direction. The choir sings motets during the offertory collection and during the post-Communion meditation period.

Today, after the Communion reflection time, there is a crisp financial report from the parish council. Churchwell makes announcements, says prayers, and gives the blessing. We sing a good song. I walk into the Atlanta sunshine, glad to have been part of a worship, both old and new, classic in its restraint yet giving life to all these various people it draws from every part of this most variegated city of the South.

Luke Timothy Johnson *teaches New Testament at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University.*

Dayton, Ohio

Corpus Christi is a small and Spanish-style urban church. Gladioli and ferns decorate the altar. A large crucifix looms prominently in the background. A support for my kneeler is missing; a fellow parishioner quickly explains why two hymnals hold it up.

My son, the football player, notices a teen-ager wearing a jacket from a rival high school. I remind him that here we are all one in Christ. He grimaces playfully.

The pews are full, but not packed, with a mix of people of all ages, 280 altogether (our diocese requires an October count). Dress varies from casual to semidressed-up. There are about fifteen black people present (our socially and economically diverse neighborhood is 50 percent black) and a few Asians and Hispanics. Among the white majority of the congregation, many are of German descent. There are at least three mentally handicapped people in attendance, as well as several who are physically handicapped.

The music director is Chinese, and leads us from the *People's Mass Book*. The twelve-member choir begins the entrance hymn as the pastor processes up the main aisle along with our permanent deacon, a seminarian-in-residence, two altar girls, and a lector. Over 90 percent of those in the front half of the church sing with pep, while under 10 percent in the rear half of the church sing at all. The overall impression, though, is of a church filled with singing.

The pastor, an excellent liturgist and homilist, welcomes everyone and announces World Mission Sunday. The atmosphere is celebrative yet reverent. The deacon invites all the young children of the parish to come forward to be blessed and sent off to an adjoining room for Liturgy of the Word. About seventeen children and two catechists march off.

The lector and the deacon proclaim the Scriptures loudly and clearly. In between readings, two parishioners lead the congregation in the responsorial psalm. We sing: God is love, and all who live in love live in God. The participation is excellent.

The seminarian-in-residence gives the homily. He bases his reflections on the readings for the day, and he has intelligent things to say. He speaks of how difficult it was to have faith even for those closest to Jesus, and of how faith remains dif-

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ficult today. James and John missed the point that in this life we are called to be servants. Service begins at home and at work, but on World Mission Sunday we should also be mindful of our call to evangelize the larger world. The homilist's delivery could use improvement, a point he has made himself in the past.

Several candidates for baptism rise to be blessed and to leave with the director of religious education for "breaking of the word." Now at the offertory, the children and their catechists return. During the consecration, the tone shifts from celebrative to solemn. Many heads are bowed. At the elevation of the chalice, a man two pews in front of me strikes his breast. During the Lord's Prayer, people throughout the church hold hands. Their handshakes and greetings at the kiss of peace register as heartfelt. The Lord and his love are present among us.

Almost all of the worshippers receive Communion. Several men and women serve as eucharistic ministers, distributing both host and cup. The Communion hymn is one of my favorites: "We Hold the Death of the Lord Deep in Our Hearts."

Very few people leave immediately after Communion. We move briskly through prayers and announcements and close with a rousing "To Jesus Christ Our Sovereign King." A few people genuflect as they leave their pews. On leaving Mass, many conversations begin among small groups of people. Ten minutes later several groups are still conversing. Many others have already gone over to the school building for coffee and doughnuts.

Several members of my family who attended Mass with me have looked over this liturgical critique and say that, while no one sentence is false, the overall impression I give is idealized. Many of those in attendance, my critics say, were distracted and probably did not get much out of it. I thank God for my gift of experiencing reality in an idealized and glorified manner, and for the grace of this sacrament which nourishes my ability to do so.

Dennis M. Doyle *teaches theology at the University of Dayton.*

Villanova, Pennsylvania

In undertaking this task I felt a kinship with Justin Martyr, the second-century apologist who described a Sunday assembly in his *First Apology*. But, unlike Justin, I am not mounting a defense against the misconceptions of non-Christian Romans.

I joined the community assembling in Saint Thomas of Villanova chapel on the campus of Villanova University. We gathered for the earliest of three evening liturgies celebrated to meet the time preferences of students. It was 6:00 P.M. on the Sunday after fall break, and students were still returning, but the pews, seating about 550, were filled. As usual, the congregation likewise attracted persons from the surrounding area, including a diversity of ages and families, which added the exuberance of small children to the assembly. The liturgical coordinator, a young woman, greeted and welcomed us, announced the names of our readers, and encouraged us to turn and greet one another. Accomplished student musicians and singers drew the congregation into song. Instrumental accompaniment for the hymns and responsorial psalms on this evening included guitars, piano, and organ. Did everyone around me, particularly the males, sing? No. But all had come, and most did sing!

The Gothic Revival chapel in which we were gathered has been completely redesigned in accord with liturgical practice after Vatican II. It has white walls, a white marble floor, and an abundance of light, even in the evening darkness. The Eucharist is reserved in a chapel at the front right. On the left is a Mary chapel, with a simple icon portrayal. The altar-table, made of marble, has been moved forward, so that the front of the congregation wraps around it. The chapel's simple decoration will not send lovers of baroque into rapture, but I like it.

The Word and responsorials from the Scriptures were read by women and men. The presider, Father Richard O'Leary, O.S.A., from campus ministry, homilized on the themes of suffering, compassion, and service which resonated in the readings and Gospel, making connections with the service projects for which many students had volunteered during the previous days of fall break. He compared the disciples who were afraid to really understand Jesus' openness to suffering with the blindness and fear in his own/our lives as related to the poor and suffering. In reflecting on how a Christian is

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called to be different in that regard, the homilist did not set himself above the community but acknowledged his own struggle, relating what the guests of Saint Francis Hospice in Philadelphia taught him about the presence of Christ, as he worked there with student volunteers. Having joined his struggle to ours, he proclaimed the eucharistic prayer in the name of all.

Women and men assisted the presider in the preparation of the gifts. The entire assembly then stood during the eucharistic prayer, singing the "Holy, Holy, Holy" and the Great Amen. We were not passive observers but baptized concelebrants. All joined hands for the Lord's Prayer. All offered greetings of peace, but with greater warmth evident among those who came as friends. Admittedly, the web of relationships in our complex, mobile society differs from those of a village. We have left behind other barriers: the *Apostolic Tradition* of the third century was adamant that men not give the kiss of peace to women, or *vice versa*; church orders of the third and fourth centuries also insisted that different genders, and thus families, sit apart. We, by contrast, were served by eight eucharistic ministers, both men and women. All received the body of Christ; a majority took the cup. The reverence indicated that those receiving did not consider Eucharist to be ordinary food. After the closing song, everyone applauded.

Could I find shortcomings? Certainly—but as Pope John XXIII noted in his speech opening Vatican II, the past is not perfection in comparison to our era. The third-century *Didascalia* instructed the deacon to keep people from "whispering, falling asleep, or laughing." Caesarius, the sixth-century bishop of Arles, complained that many left right after the homily. Our gathering did not have that problem. I think God was pleased to hear our prayer.

Bernard P. Prusak *teaches theology at Villanova.*

New York, New York

The Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Mission Sunday, was also the day two friends of mine were married. The evening ceremony threw the morning Mass into relief, and left me with a liturgical melancholy.

Richard and Margaret are Jewish; he was raised Reform, she as an atheist. They decided to be married at a former synagogue on the Lower East Side, now the headquarters of a progressive art foundation, a crumbling building with a shaky tabernacle surviving at one end. It was Jewish, and it was not. Everybody thought it was the perfect space.

The couple forbade any mention of God during the service. Instead, the cantor would sing an Italian love song as well as some of the old blessings. We would dance to Western swing, eat slices of a wedding cake decorated like a mosaic. And I would stand in the nave, wine glass in hand like the microphone of a man making a documentary, and try to ask people about the past history of the place, the city's oldest synagogue and its first Reform temple. I pictured men in black suits shaking their fists at the deity as the pogrom came. How many prayers had they lofted toward that ceiling, how many shouts and murmurs of praise and thanks and supplication? What had they prayed for? I could read about Jews of that time and place, but I would never really know what the people of that congregation had brought to synagogue each week—the particulars of their observance, the inward back-and-forth of their struggle to believe that God was just, that there was a God in the first place.

I hardly knew any better the particular beliefs of the people with whom I had attended Mass in the morning. Whereas my friends had fashioned a liturgy for themselves, those of us at the church in Chelsea that morning took the sacrament more or less as we found it. Were we some people just passing through, or a people with a faith being passed through us?

Guardian Angel, on Tenth Avenue at Twenty-first Street, is built like a fortress on the outside and a compact basilica within. There were no black suits in this congregation. There were no suits of any color. Levi Strauss was here. So was Tommy Hilfiger. The bulletin said 166 people had come to Mass last Sunday, and there appeared to be about that many today. The little group in the pews near me might have been an entourage representing the church of the next century: a Hispanic mother and her two children, a young black woman who could have been a model, an aged Irishman in a windbreaker, a white nun in a black habit, and me, a sometime churchgoer, going to Bloomingdale's afterward to exchange a gift.

The announcement came: The Mass would be celebrated by the parish administrator. The priest strode up the aisle and took a seat to the side. Two altar girls accompanied him, and in his opening remarks he told the congregation that the servers were taking part in the liturgy for the first time. Then he moved through the opening prayers with dispatch. Maybe he had another Mass to say in another parish.

The homily was a missed opportunity. On Mission Sunday last year, a priest working in Africa had come and given an expert homily on the need to spread the resources of the gospel worldwide. Today, the missionary was the parish administrator, trying to convert a few dozen Americans to a faith deeper than what they came with.

As I listened, I thought of all the homilies that had been given over the centuries so that this priest could stand before me today and give his. Imagine all the trouble that had been taken so that there might be a Roman Catholic church on the far edge of Chelsea! One day, this church had not been a church, just a cleared lot, stacks of bricks and stone, pledged human labor, and an aspiration: to plant Catholic Christianity in North America.

Those efforts had been a success, by most reckonings. But one day, as likely as not, this church would be a church no longer. What then? I tried to imagine the old Church of the Guardian Angel deconsecrated, sold, and renovated—now

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an art gallery, say, or a dozen apartments, each with a stained glass window in the breakfast nook. I thought of the 166 or so of us here today, and how we would be made over into people of our time and place, all our particularities falling away with the flesh, our doubts and misgivings and mutinous impulses smoothed out into generalities about modern American Catholics.

Supposedly we were bound together by the liturgy, and bound back to the past. But the liturgy is meant to bind us to the future, too, in hope and expectation, the way my friends bound themselves together on their wedding day.

Suppose someday there was no liturgy here. What would the future think of us then? Over Sunday breakfast, at the video art opening, or during the wedding in the rented space, the people who would come after us would try to know us through what they felt they lacked, through the vestiges of Catholicism still lingering on the premises. I could hear them already, telling each other that once upon a time, back when we were here, God lived in this place.

Paul Elie *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

Rochester, New York

A lot would have to go wrong with the liturgy for Mass not to make my Catholic faith a more compelling reality. On October 19, things at my parish went fairly right—which means, to my taste. But, as Annie Dillard brilliantly dramatizes in her essay, "An Expedition to the Pole," personal taste is not what Mass is meant to serve. Only when Dillard imagines herself transformed into the most ridiculous member of her church's dreadful singing group can she join the wacky communal trip toward the Absolute.

I'm not as tough as Dillard, so I was grateful this Sunday that the music was mostly congenial. The choir did well for amateurs. I liked their brief chanting of the *Asperges me* during the opening sprinkling rite. I liked the organist's perky improvised march as the children left, with the presider's blessing, for their own Liturgy of the Word. I had to put up with only one hymn I can't bear, "Here I am, Lord."

I was grateful, too, for our pastor's eucharistic reverence as presider. Though I'm frustrated that his pre-Vatican II conception of the Eucharist keeps our parish locked in an outmoded theology, his joy that Jesus is "truly present in the Holy Eucharist" (as he appends to some of the prayers) overflows into a genuine welcoming spirit. So, as is his custom, he invited those bringing up the gifts to set the table. He beamed encouragingly at the altar servers, especially the girl with Downs syndrome whom the parish has nurtured since infancy; when she started serving last year our hearts collectively melted. Our pastor's repeated metaphor of "parish family" was enhanced by our visual surroundings: the Gothic carved wood Apostles joining us in the sanctuary, around the walls the extended family of stained-glass saints surrounding us in this 1910 church.

I was even grateful, in a way I've learned from Dillard, for the disastrous homily given by a guest priest. Choosing to read the Gospel option for Mission Sunday, he then performed a stand-up comedy monologue on his hilarious adventures with alligators and tarantulas in the Nicaraguan jungle. I was furious at his wrecking of the liturgy's spirit; yet it gave me something concrete to forgive at the Lord's Prayer. I also had to forgive, there, the irritating inattention of about a fifth of the congregation: those who drifted in late, who sat with dully blank faces, who didn't sing the hymns or Mass parts, despite the cantor's joyously energetic efforts to engage them. But praying "forgive us...as we forgive," I thought: Am I any different? My attention drifts even as I sing; my body gets to church on time while my spirit lags behind; surely I can be as ridiculously maddening to others as the homilist was to me.

I'm not trying to make a case for inattention or lousy liturgy. But I'm willing to forgive some bumbling at Mass because, really, we are all just bumbling toward the kingdom. Sunday Mass is most meaningful to me when I'm celebrating it with those I've stumbled along with—even crashed into—in our efforts to build the kingdom during the preceding week. So this Sunday, my Catholic faith became the most compelling reality at the moment when I received Communion from a fellow parishioner with whom I clash on every political issue of church or society. As we exchanged

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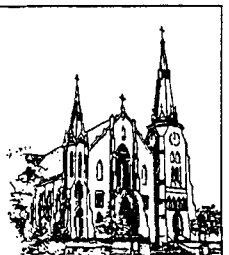

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the words "The Body of Christ" and "Amen," and our Lord passed between our hands, our eyes met on what we both knew was the only plane that matters, where we are one Body.

Peggy Rosenthal *is co-editor of* Divine Inspiration: The Life of Jesus in World Poetry *(Oxford University Press).*

London, England

Maybe it is not as important as we often think it is that the eucharistic liturgy be celebrated according to contemporary sensibilities and postconciliar changes. These things are certainly important to me, but after my experience on October 19, I have been questioning some of my assumptions.

The liturgy we attended couldn't, by my standards, have been more off-putting. But the church was surprisingly full for a Sunday evening at 7:00 o'clock. And it was most noticeably full of young men and women in their twenties, people in decidedly short supply at the Masses I usually attend. I was in London at the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri in Brompton Road, Kensington. I have been to Mass at the Oratory several times over the years—not because I admire either its architecture or its liturgies, but because I can reliably find my way there.

Brompton Oratory, as it is usually called, is an Italianate basilica, vast and ornate, easily seating 1,500. Its founders were Fathers Frederick Faber and John Henry Newman and the present church was completed in the late 1890s. To my eyes, it is an ugly church even though it has lately been restored so that the gaudy marble, plaster, and paint look as good at they were ever meant to.

The main altar was the style of altar I grew up with, part of the east wall of the huge sanctuary, raised up five or six steps, and placed so that the celebrant's back is to the congregation. There was no altar placed at the front of the sanctuary so that Mass could be offered by a priest facing the congregation. (Later in the week I checked at Westminster Cathedral in London and found that the placement of the altar was the same as it is in all American churches I have seen. The great Gothic cathedrals in Paris and Chartres have also successfully adapted altar and sanctuary to the demands of the liturgical reforms.)

The liturgy at Saint Philip Neri was certainly a "one-man show." The priest, unassisted by servers, offered the opening prayers and read from the Old and New Testaments from a lectern facing the congregation. Then he crossed the sanctuary to read the Gospel. When I saw a man in cassock and surplice enter the sanctuary, I thought, "Ah ha, the server is running late." But no, this was a missionary priest come to give the homily. October 19 was World Mission Sunday. The homily consisted of several amusing stories about life in Pakistan and East Africa and was not entirely without theological content. However, no attempt was made to tie it to the readings for the day. After the homily, the celebrant made a few announcements. Among these was an observation that there was a shortage of readers and servers at this Mass, and a suggestion that perhaps some young men in the congregation might wish to consider this ministry. After the prayers of the faithful, several young men in cassocks did manage to take up the collection, and I couldn't help meanly wondering why the shortage had not included that ministry.

There were no individual greetings at the "Peace be with you." In fact, I didn't even notice the words of the greeting. The prayers of the offertory and the consecration were audible because there were microphones on the altar, but the effect of the celebrant's being sixty feet away with his back turned to us was more painful to me than I ever would have guessed. We received the Eucharist kneeling at an altar rail in exactly the way I remember doing in my childhood. A second priest appeared to assist, gesturing impatiently when we didn't fill in the empty places at the rail quickly enough. There was no chalice for the communicants.

If I were reviewing a theatrical event, I'd have to say it couldn't have been worse. *But* there were seven or eight hundred people there—on a Sunday at seven in the evening! Their devotion was palpable; most received Holy Communion. In a village in Sussex the following Sunday, the liturgy was similar to the beautiful, communal Eucharist in my home parish of Saint Agnes in San Francisco—to which I have gratefully returned.

Lyn C. Isbell *teaches English in a Catholic high school in San Francisco.*

South Bend, Indiana

On alternating Sundays, we go to Mass at the Holy Family Catholic Worker House in South Bend. Because our motley congregation is diminutive and predictable, because most of the priests are also our friends, and because our venue is a medium-sized living room, the liturgical complexion, if that's the right phrase, usually combines familiarity and formality. And we usually start about fifteen minutes late.

This is a usual Sunday. Two Mexican families have been staying at the house, and they have joined us for the last couple of Masses, but today we are a middle-class, mostly Anglo group of some thirty folks. From nearby Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College, there are teachers, students, and administrators, some of their spouses and some of their kids. There are also young and old social workers, a high-school teacher, a video producer, a couple of longstanding friends of the house, and a couple of grandparents visiting from Tennessee.

The Saint Joseph River Valley is astun with autumn, and, in observance of Notre Dame home-game football weekend rites, many of us have been together at parties last night, so our procession from the front porch, through an aromatic

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kitchen and dining room, is a confused, noisy, and meandering affair of gossip resumed, good-natured taunts exchanged, and adolescents exasperated. In the living room, where a dozen folding chairs have been added to the furniture, we arrange ourselves around an end table which will be our altar. It is covered with an embroidered cloth on which have been placed a thick yellow candle, an earthenware vase of wildflowers, and the missal. It takes only a few seconds for a recollecting silence to dissolve the general chat, and we begin.

An abrupt, mutual diffidence and the absence of musically gifted members preclude an opening hymn this morning, but there are some newcomers among us, and the murmured round of introductions initiated by our priest seems an appropriate replacement. We make the sign of the cross together and recite the anciently prescribed words. When or whether our reflex becomes fervor, I wouldn't presume to say. I do know that we've shown up, we are trying to pray attentively together, and we are awaiting Jesus.

An intimate friend of many present—conversant with and even participant in the joys, woes, follies, and triumphs of two generations of us—the priest is able to homilize compellingly about the subtle and lethal ways any of us can abandon the trail of our Lord to go whoring after status in the kingdom, and about the mercy which might inhere in our occluded perceptions of his grace. I notice that even my teen-agers seem to be listening.

With the exceptions of the Gospel reading and the recitation of the Our Father (during which we, including my own curmudgeonly self, join hands), we remain seated throughout the liturgy. In the prayer of the faithful, the present and former guests of the house are remembered, as are two relatives dying of cancer and the victims and perpetrators of a recent round of driveby shootings in town. Rap music from a hyperamplified car stereo throbs on the street outside as the priest holds up a small loaf of bread and a ceramic cup filled with wine and utters the words of institution. There is silence for a minute or two before we proclaim the mystery of faith. We receive Communion together, under both kinds. We pray in silence for a time before dismissal, after which a burgeoning general chat dissolves our recollected silence.

A new staff member at the house shyly announces that she has made some apple cobbler, and that there is fresh coffee brewing in the kitchen. Both are delicious.

Michael O. Garvey *is the author of* Finding Fault *(Thomas More).*

Corpus Christi, Texas

The cathedral of Corpus Christi, after surviving hurricanes and termites, stands sturdily on the high bluff overlooking Corpus Christi Bay. The architecture is New-World Spanish, appropriately, since the ethnic make-up of the city is now about 50 percent Mexican-American.

The interior of the cathedral has preserved its colorful flavor: statues of Mary and Joseph, still in their niches, with their own altar; Saint Patrick and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux; paintings of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary; and a large mural of Christ the King and several saints in the apse. The high marble pulpit is still used for the readings.

My observation of the congregants at the 9:30 A.M. Mass revealed an impressive devotion, so that any question of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist would have been an act of supererogation. Nearly everyone in the church partook of the Eucharist, I thought with due solemnity, yet a feeling of intimacy.

The music was magnificent, led by two highly professional ministers, Lee Gwozdz and Greg Labus, and the Pontifical Choir of about a hundred voices carrying the congregation along in the sung parts, all but the Creed and the Our Father.

The service began with an excellent organ prelude. The *Kyrie* was sung in the Latin of the old Mass XVI, alternating between choir and congregation. The *Gloria,* also in Latin, was from the old Mass VIII, the Mass of the Angels, and was sung in its entirety by choir and congregation.

Other musical highlights included a thrilling rendition of the anthem—appropriate to the Gospel reading—"Seek to Serve," by composer Lloyd Pfautsch; the *Agnus Dei,* which came out, "Cordero de Díos," from the *Misa Guadalupe* by Joel Martinson, sung entirely in Spanish; and finally, the Communion hymn, sung by choir and congregation, "In This

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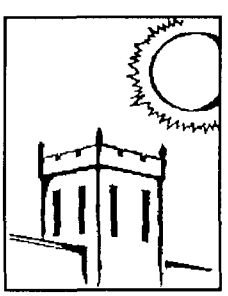

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Sacrament, Lord Jesus," by William J. Marsh, whose Latin Masses and motets were very popular before the council.

Father Lowery Ross, the celebrant, based his homily on the Gospel reading, to scold us a little bit about being selfish, like James and John. He spoke from the steps of the sanctuary, with the usual lapel mike. I found the amplification very poor, with too little treble for intelligible speech.

In the sanctuary were three altar boys and one girl.

For me the Mass was a means of palpable grace and reaffirmation of faith, in great part, I must confess, because of the extraordinary music. I hope I may be forgiven: I was director in that same choir loft for ten years.

Ralph Thibodeau *is professor emeritus of Music Literature and Western Humanities at Del Mar College.*

Queens, New York

On a typical Sunday, Saint Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Jackson Heights, Queens, is one of the busiest places in this bustling neighborhood of immigrants, old and new. With at least 5,000 families in the parish, this grand Romanesque-style church has eight Sunday Masses, including two in Spanish. I went there seeking quiet prayer and reflection and wondered if that was any more likely to happen there than at Grand Central Station at rush hour. Saint Joan's main sanctuary is a spectacular mosaic of marble and bronze. Even when empty, the space is alive with images of the saints, from the Twelve Apostles to Saint Ambrose to Saint Gregory the Great.

The noon English Mass was a staid and solemn affair, attended mostly by the neighborhood's graying Irish, Polish, German, and Italian parishioners. A single, sweet voice from the organist's loft resonated throughout the service, singing the hymns I've known and loved my whole life. As familiar as the Mass was, I found it hard personally to connect to a priest who was himself a visitor and had to ask the congregation if there was to be a second offering, then apologized for rushing because he was due in a separate part of the church for another Mass.

Minutes later, the church was bursting with more than a thousand mostly young Hispanics. Crowded around a statue of Saint Joan in her armor at the front of the church, a youth choir, complete with an electric-guitar player, a percussionist, and a keyboard player, belted out lively Spanish hymns. Listening to the quick tempo and rich voices of the group, I remembered the hymnal from my Catholic school in Texas with the words of Saint Augustine on the cover reminding us that singing was like praying twice. Surely that would make this choir a veritable novena in every note.

The parishioners of Saint Joan, though divided by language, listened, for the most part, to the same readings and recited the same prayers, each group with its own sense of devotion. They shared the same wooden pews and absorbed the grandeur of the sanctuary. And yet, it was as if they were in two separate spiritual worlds. So I sat there, feeling myself somewhere in between the two. Amid a symphony of sights and sounds, I searched for the spirit of the liturgy and found it, not so much in the splendor of the altar nor even in the chimes at the consecration, but in the small details from both of the scenes I had witnessed: young men kneeling in their blue jeans and sneakers on the marble floor; women tapping their hands on the altar to the beat of the choir band; a priest laying his hand on a child's head as he gave the host to the boy's father; an old Hispanic woman making the sign of the cross four different ways across her wrinkled face, praising Christ in a whisper of Spanish; the tiny palm of a child's hand turned upward as she recited the Lord's Prayer. In all of these things, I found the mystery of the sacrament that made this church alive and whole.

Elena Cabriel *is a free-lance writer who lives in New York City.*

San Rafael, California

Saint Rafael's, one of the original California missions, sits on a rise 200 yards above the main drag of *American Graffiti* and downtown San Rafael. Fifteen minutes north of the Golden Gate Bridge, Saint Rafael's is the principal church in Marin County, where only 31 percent of the people are churched. My only explanation for the low degree of churchedness is that Marin County is so beautiful that many believe they are already in paradise. So, the 250 people—middle class, shop owners, contractors, retired—at the 9:00 A.M. Mass were among the religious elite.

Three things struck me about Saint Rafael's. First, they take the liturgy seriously. The old, high-ceilinged church (not the original mission church) has been nicely redone to accommodate the reforms of Vatican II. The altar is in the center of the nave facing the people on three sides. A young woman smartly introduced the celebrant. Then the young music director led the congregation with a guitar and a clean, pleasing voice in a key we could sing. A beautifully modulated organ accompanied us twice and, along with the music selections, enhanced the sense of the sacred. I can't say our singing loosened the stained glass, but the people—many older, silvered, and bent—sang hard, for Catholics.

Second, the young priest celebrant was obviously invested in this liturgy, speaking and singing in a spirited way, making eye contact with all three sides. When people clapped half-heartedly to the rhythm of a zippy alleluia, he chided them gently: "The clapping is new, but we have to grow. We don't come here to be just head Catholics but *heart* Catholics." I must say the sermon, though heartfelt, was not tightly tied together: Stretching the Gospel theme of service to mean compassion was off-target and disconcerting. And I would have liked a few more ideas. Everybody shook hands at the kiss of peace, some rather shyly, and we received the Eucharist under both species before

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we shared a sacred minute of silence.

Third, the way the priest said the words of consecration implicitly emphasized the Last Supper over Calvary. He used a smooth, reverent, conversational tone not much different from the rest of the canon. There was no doubt about his belief in the Real Presence, but his behavior said to me, "This is meal more than sacrifice; horizontal more than vertical." And I couldn't help but compare his style with that of a particularly pious priest in a parish nearby, who brings the canon to a halt and utters in a kind of hush: "*This is my body*," then holds the upraised host for long, mystical moments. More sacrifice, more vertical, less horizontal.

Do these subtle emphases impact beliefs in the reality of the Eucharist? I can't say, although I would prefer a mix of the two. Even the banquet is a mystical action. There may have been a serious doubter or two at the Mass, but my guess is that most if not all believed in the Real Presence and found that belief nourished, as I did, by this liturgy.

Dennis Burke *is a writer living in Ross, California, just over the hill from San Rafael.*

Gaithersburg, Maryland

I began vesting for the 11:00 A.M. Mass only minutes before the cantor started rehearsing the assembly. Someone after 9 o'clock Mass had needed to talk over a crisis at home, and it took me a bit longer than I had anticipated to hear her out. So, now I was in a rush to get to the entrance as the cantor began going over the refrain to the responsorial psalm. Part of my brain was still revising the conclusion to my homily. It had gone well at 7:30 A.M. Mass, and was better at the 9, but I still didn't feel the close was strong.

"Here in the place, new light is streaming," we began to sing, and off we went down the aisle, as I put aside any effort to find a better closing for the homily. People are really singing today, I thought. It's a good song, they like it and know it well: "See in this space our fears and our dreamings...."

After the greeting, I urged people to raise their hands if there was an empty seat near them—the walls were already lined with standees. "Gather us in," we had just sung, and the Lord certainly was answering our prayers! The claustrophobic feeling of the crowded room eased a bit as I dismissed seventy-five-plus kids to their own children's liturgy of the Word. Wondrously, everyone seemed to quiet down almost immediately, and a particularly good reader kept our attention fixed as she proclaimed the servant song of Isaiah.

The remainder of the Liturgy of the Word "worked," by which I mean people seemed attentive, engaged, not restless. I was satisfied with my homily, and I let go of any worry about how to wrap it up. "Third time's a charm," I mused, feeling good that I'd given it my best shot. I knew that some would be helped by what I had said and others wouldn't, and the rest was out of my hands.

"Columbia Road Health Services will receive our tithe this week," I announced; then I explained that the organization provides services for the indigent of our area, and I urged people to make their own gift a sacrificial one, just as the parish itself sacrifices by tithing each week. The energy in the room escalated significantly as the children returned to their parents, the youngest ones clutching some sort of papers that their leader of prayer had evidently used in her homily.

I listened carefully for those notes as I began singing Haugen's Mass of Creation. At the last Mass I'd lost track somehow and messed up part of the *epiclesis*, and so I was particularly attentive this time around. The assembly's responses were strong and clear, and today it seemed as if virtually everyone was singing. Their energy lifted me up. I felt their prayerfulness, and I thrilled at the strength of their faith. I thought of the woman dying of cancer whom I was going to visit in a few hours, and how her sufferings were what the first reading was about. As I broke the bread with the eucharistic ministers, I thought of the phrase in our parish's vision statement, "...broken we gather..." and the words of the opening song played again in my ears, "...gather us in...."

Robert D. Duggan *is pastor of Saint Rose of Lima Parish in Gaithersburg, Maryland.*

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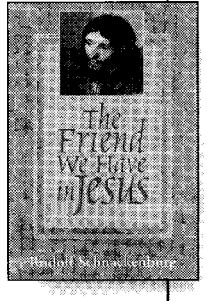

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

While visiting the Twin Cities, I worshiped in a suburban Minneapolis megachurch of 4,000 families where parishioners join at the rate of one family a day. My overwhelming impressions were of youth and energy—greeters at each entrance, the nursery filling rapidly, parishioners placing intentions in a basket which would be held aloft at the prayer of the faithful. A video monitor in the gathering space near the entrance scrolled through the events of the day and the week ahead—meetings for every conceivable ministry—testifying to high involvement in parish life and a huge outreach beyond its walls. Before Mass, the pastor roamed throughout the assembly, chatting, receiving "news bulletins," embracing and being tackled by children.

Remarkably, the 1,650 seats filled up from front to back; the "cheap seats" in the addition allow only limited sight of the altar and three-sided assembly. Many parishioners paused to bless themselves at the font, a large immersion pool near the entrance to the church. Although religious art fills the complex, there is none in the sanctuary space; only fall-colored banners adorned the back wall. But as I would discover, there is a strong sense of Christ's presence in the assembly itself.

Just before the Eucharist began, the music group led a rehearsal of "Lead Me, Guide Me," an African-American hymn. I noticed there were few black, Hispanic, or Asian parishioners—at least at this celebration. People rehearsed willingly and then rose for the procession. Today's presider was a religious-order priest who serves this community once or twice a month. He was joined during the liturgy by at least twenty others, women and men in equal number, all of whom appeared at ease in their ministries. The assembly sang well, perhaps because the lyrics were projected on two large screens. Everyone could look up, not into a hymnal.

After the liturgical greeting and an informal word, the presider introduced the readings with two questions which became part of the penitential rite. A sufficient pause followed so we could actually think about the questions. I suspect we heard the readings better because of this introduction. An improvised opening prayer came next. Because it did not employ the traditional cue, and because the sound system was either poor or poorly used, few said "Amen" at the conclusion of this prayer or any of the other prayers. Care had been taken with inclusive language and in using a variety of metaphors for the name of God. But having worked with the International Commission on English in the Liturgy for nineteen years, I would have appreciated some nod to the existence of a Sacramentary. Spoken prayers were the element of the liturgy least attended to.

The homily about gospel service was developed in the context of the recent national gathering of Promise Keepers. On this Sunday the homily was directed explicitly to the men. It offered the gospel injunction not to lord one's authority over others as a corrective to the notion of male leadership of wife and family. "Service does not mean that I decide what you need and serve you, but that we mutually serve one another after asking what it is the other really needs." Men—and the women and children with them—paid close attention.

There were warm greetings of peace, a reaching out toward others at the Our Father, and mutual affection among families. The seven-minute Communion procession (real bread; both species) was reverent and included blessings for infants and small children. Few left worship before the final hymn.

The liturgy was decidedly low church. The assembly was there by choice and participated actively. Insofar as any participant-observer prays, I prayed, giving thanks for this young and vital face of the church.

Kathleen Hughes, R.S.C.J., *teaches at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.*

Chicago, Illinois

The morning is sunny but cold. Alone or in silent pairs, they enter the huge gray Gothic church for the 8 o'clock Mass at this suburban Chicago parish. Inside, there is something everywhere for the eyes: statues, paintings, mosaics, stained glass windows, and mottled marble pillars. At the altar, the vested celebrant will nearly disappear into the jumble.

The song leader welcomes the people, nearly all white and elderly, scattered three and four to a pew throughout the church. When she announces the first hymn, they stand dutifully but stolidly gaze forward. Despite the bouncy refrain, "All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place," they don't seem sure. They keep their coats on, just in case, and neither the spirited piano playing nor the enthusiastic song leader can draw a sound from them.

After the solemn cadences of Isaiah's suffering servant and Hebrews' great high priest comes the story of James and John, lobbying for promotion from "fisherman" to "Assistant Messiah," despite their lack of qualifications.

The pastor then comes down from the altar to the center aisle. He begins to reflect gently and conversationally on power, leadership, and service. At first his words are wispy, bloodless, remote from the din and dust of daily life. But they come alive as he points to good parents as common but powerful examples of suffering-servant leadership. Like Jesus himself, the pastor doesn't sugarcoat it. The power and leadership entailed in service, he says, will make us suffer. Yet its pain can make us wise and compassionate, like Jesus the great high priest. What we have in the Gospel this morning, he concludes, is really a new vision of what we are—and what we can become. There, in ordinary language, is the Paschal Mystery—in just thirteen minutes.

A stillness pervades the rest of the Mass. The pastor does not try to whip up their energy nor urge the people to sing

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or respond louder. At the Lord's Prayer, however, he invites them to stand and join hands. Most of them do. In the small tableau formed up in the sanctuary, holding hands with the song leader, piano player, lectors, and altar server, he is the only male.

In the final prayer, he improvises. He thanks God "for our selves, for each other, for this parish, and for every single member of this parish." This parish, however, has spent two hard years planning to renovate the church's interior. Angry parishioners, feeling thwarted in the process, have even aired their complaints in the local newspaper. He still gives thanks "for every single member."

Yet a third of the congregation is leaving or gone by the end of the final hymn. What this Mass has meant to them remains their secret. Alone or in silent pairs, they walk away from the church. The sun hasn't broken the morning's chill.

Jon Nilson *teaches theology at Loyola University, Chicago.*

Portland, Oregon

A little Catholic university chapel, all cedar and sunlight, amid a riot of rhododendrons. Behind the chapel a crowd of muscular old oak trees. Before it a sea of fresh-cut grass, dotted with scrawny cherry trees, toddlers, dandelions. Above it a ragged arrowhead of geese, southing.

Sounds: pants-legs scissoring toward Mass, small talk by the front door, chirping children, a metronomic phoebe, Bach's Organ Fugue in C Minor.

Inside: a small child with his right arm in the baptismal font up to his shoulder. Child's father turns and notices his son's oar in the water; father emits indescribable sound, carts boy off to dry pew.

Mass begins, gently.

There are perhaps 150 people at Christ the Teacher this morning, the great majority of them undergraduates, although it's an all-ages show, and from the balcony where I ride herd on my three small children, I see gray hair, white hair, green hair, blue hair, no hair.

My children, interested and hungry, eat crackers.

"This morning we gather as a faith community to broaden our vision," says the young priest. He will utter the word community seven times this morning, by my count; tribal binding is the clear theme of this Mass. Two other priests are robed and on the altar, and the whole crowd sings lustily, holds hands while chanting the Our Father, exchanges hearty handshakes of peace at startling length (one energetic boy making his way completely around the chapel). All but a handful will receive Communion; all but a handful will stay after Mass to chat in cheerful knots; all, apparently, are excited and stimulated by Mass. This crowd isn't dutiful; it's pumped. Rumors of death of faith among youth greatly exaggerated, at least this morning.

The Gospel, from Mark, is about the Apostles James and John, who itch for good seats in heaven and demand same of the Rabbi. Christ fires back classic Christly conundrum: he who wishes to be great must be a servant.

Homily: "Not the most flattering portrait of James and John, is it? They ask for prestige and power, and Christ rebukes them sharply, as he rebukes us, all these years later, as we itch for power, too. Be honest: Don't you wish for status among your peers? Don't you want to be first and best? We're more like James and John than we like to admit, and as usual, Christ disturbs us...."

My children, having marched through crackers and ginger snaps, are now eating grapes.

Eucharist: At the moment of transformation the priest pauses for a tremulous instant, and the whole chapel is riveted and silent as he hoists *I am who am* aloft; and then comes the Communion shuffle, the sharp smell of mediocre wine, dry crackers on tongues, another hymn, and the ranks of bowed, meditating heads, blessing and dismissal, another hymn, and then the organ groans awake and sends us out again into the light, where the phoebe is still keeping time, and for no reason, every reason, I am delighted, my pockets filled with grapes, my pinkies gripped by small boys, my morning mad with miracles.

Brian Doyle *is the editor of* Portland Magazine *at the University of Portland, in Oregon. He and his father, Jim Doyle, are the authors of* Two Voices *(Ligouri), a collection of their essays.*

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The real trial of the century

BIG TROUBLE
J. Anthony Lukas
Simon and Schuster, $32.50, 875 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

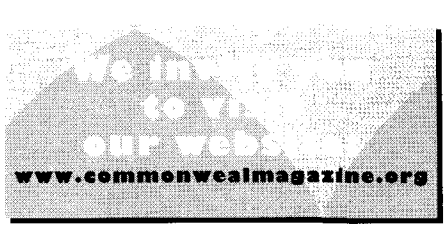
A prize-winning reporter, the late Anthony Lukas had a determination to get the story with all its complexities and ambiguities, a quality that informed his account, in *Common Ground* (Knopf, 1985), of families caught up in Boston's desegregation crisis. In *Big Trouble*, the same relentlessness led him to broaden a chronicle of class conflict and murder, with the celebrated trial that followed, into the echo of time past, a grand and wandering epic with occasional thunders.

At the end of 1905 in Caldwell, Idaho, Frank Steunenberg, an ex-governor and local entrepreneur, was assassinated by a bomb that exploded when he opened his front gate. Suspicion fell on an out-of-towner, who (out of many aliases) came to be known as "Harry Orchard," and who—having unaccountably hung around after the murder—proved to have kept incriminating evidence in his hotel room.

Coming into the case, the Pinkertons' "Great Detective," James McParland, was convinced from the beginning that Orchard had acted for an "inner circle" of the militant Western Federation of Miners (WFM). He had grounds as well as prejudices. Industrial conflict at the turn of the century was often violent, especially in the West, and Steunenberg was regarded by labor as a Judas: elected on a mildly prolabor platform, he had come down heavily against striking miners, ousting prolabor local officials, proclaiming martial law, and permitting mass detentions. In any case, aided by an avuncular manner and hints of a reduced sentence, McParland persuaded—and helped—Orchard to write a confession in which he admitted to being a contract killer for the WFM. (Orchard did avoid the death sentence, but died in prison in 1954.)

The pretrial legal process was scandalous, even in the balmier atmosphere of that era. The key WFM officials—Charles Moyer, George Pettibone, and, preeminently, "Big Bill" Haywood—were extradited from Colorado in what came down to a legal kidnapping. The mine owners paid much of the cost of prosecution and the state's leaders (including the newly elected Senator William E. Borah, the most eloquent voice for the prosecution) lied about the evidence against the WFM officials, deceiving, among others, President Theodore Roosevelt. The pretrial maneuvering also had a comic side: after a lot of dashing about, with dark mutterings about bribes and threats, the state was left without corroboration for Orchard's story. And T.R., who rarely spoke softly, despite his own saying, called the defendants "undesirable citizens," provoking enough labor and socialist solidarity to pay for a defense "dream team," including Edmund Richardson and Clarence Darrow.

The trial left more room for heroes. Lukas lets his readers see Darrow with all his incongruities—an eloquent but indifferent lawyer, willing to cut moral and legal corners; a champion of the downtrodden who demanded a very high fee; a paragon to the Left who was contemptuous of women and most ordinary people, and whose sophomoric theorizing was mostly shaped by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Still, warts and all, Darrow moved the jury. And the judge, Fremont Wood, though privately convinced of Haywood's guilt, was conspicuously fair-minded, giving the jury instructions that strengthened the defense's case. Ultimately, the jury, troubled by the lack of corroboration, didn't trust Orchard's accusations against Moyer, Pettibone, and Haywood; surprising both sides, the jurors put their inclinations aside and decided on the basis of the evidence and the law. In the end, as they say, the system worked.



In Lukas's almost obsessive telling, the details of this saga are cherished and treated as occasions for digression, so that his canvas is Rubens-like, lavish and voluptuous, but always bordering on excess. I enjoyed Lukas's comments on the place of hotels in turn-of-the-century culture (and his fondness for Boise's grand Idanha Hotel), along with his account of local baseball, where Walter Johnson was taking toddler-steps toward immortality. And if, when Ethel Barrymore appears, Lukas goes on a bit about theatrical road companies, it's worth it to learn that Miss Barrymore, with a professional's eye, saw through Darrow's "props" and melodrama, fixing instead on the jury—"wonderful-looking men...used to looking at great distances," she describes them, rightly convinced of their integrity. Still, there are limits: while readers need to be reminded about racism in labor politics—the expectation that white strikers would not fraternize with black troops, and *vice versa*, made African-American soldiers seem ideal strike-breakers in the Idaho mines—Lukas doesn't need twenty pages on the history of those black units

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and the life of their commander, Henry Clay Merriam.

For all his attention to the saplings in his forest, moreover, Lukas slights at least one tall tree. Talking about detectives, Lukas goes back to the seventeenth century; he writes pages on McParland's career; he observes that the Pinkertons, particularly, were an antilabor vanguard, adept, among other things, at the use of *agents provocateurs*. But in explaining the jury's distaste for McParland, Lukas fails to mention the Populist platform of 1892, which denounced the Pinkertons as a "hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws." In a state where populism had been strong and Populist sensibilities stronger, McParland, as Barrymore might have recognized, was playing to a tough house.

Yet nothing is more peculiar about Lukas's story than its ending. Chasing one of his byways, Lukas followed his themes and characters to the bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* by the McNamara brothers, less than five years after Steunenberg's death. In his researches Lukas found a pseudonymously written letter by an embittered, erratic Socialist reporter, George Shoaf, that—as part of an attempt at extortion—implied that Haywood and his associates were guilty of Steunenberg's murder. This letter, added to the rest of the evidence, apparently persuaded Lukas, and he may have been right: Haywood was no prince, and the WFM felt desperately embattled. But, other problems aside, it isn't clear why the union should have waited until five years after Steunenberg had left the governorship to punish his treachery. Lukas, in fact, hints at a more proximate motive, the unraveling of a scheme to evade the 160-acre limitation on federal timber lots. Though eventually acquitted, Borah himself was indicted, but the Justice Department's lawyers identified Frank Steunenberg as the "leading spirit and chief organizer of the conspiracy," and it seems at least plausible that Steunenberg was killed to protect his co-conspirators. By taking Shoaf's letter as decisive, Lukas gave us less the measure of the evidence than of his own disappointment.

Finally, Lukas's emphasis on the peculiarities of turn-of-the-century America runs the risk of making his book into a memoir of dark but quaint times, safely distant from our own. Labor today doesn't appeal to dynamite as the equalizer in industrial warfare; labor-management conflicts are better mannered, and the rhetoric of class is taboo. What has not changed, however, is the imbalance between capital and labor: Unions cannot aim at the destruction of management, but management can and does set out to destroy unions—even if these days it threatens more subtly, with downsizing and outsourcing and part-time workers. In collective bargaining, the scales are weighted against labor unless government tips them back toward fairness, a support notable for its absence in recent decades. In that sense, *Big Trouble* teaches an all-too-contemporary lesson about the foundations of civic equality. □

Wilson Carey McWilliams *teaches political science at Rutgers.*

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REASON NEEDS GOD

The Last Word
Thomas Nagel
Oxford University Press, $18, 147 pp.

Edward T. Oakes

One of the most startling—indeed, downright revolutionary—statements ever made by Thomas Aquinas can be found in his *Commentary on Job*. At this point in the commentary (Job 13:3), Job has had enough of his sermonizing, know-it-all "friends" and exclaims: "Enough! Silence! *God* is my disputant, not you. I mean to lodge my complaint, not with mortal flesh, but with the Almighty." In his comment Thomas gets to wondering whether such peremptory boldness is seemly: A disputation between God and a frail mortal seems unbefitting because of the vast disparity between the two parties. But then Thomas, answering his own objection, goes on to say: "It should be remembered that truth does not vary according to persons; when a human being says something true he is invincible, irrespective of the one with whom he may be disputing."

When I first read this passage, it hit me like a thunderclap, for in essence Thomas is saying that *truth trumps God*. Not in the sense, of course, that God is subordinate to truth, since for Thomas God is obviously identical with the truth; but certainly in our relationship with God, whenever our image of God is discrepant with our view of the truth, the truth takes precedence. Or, to use Thomas Nagel's term, truth must always have "the last word."

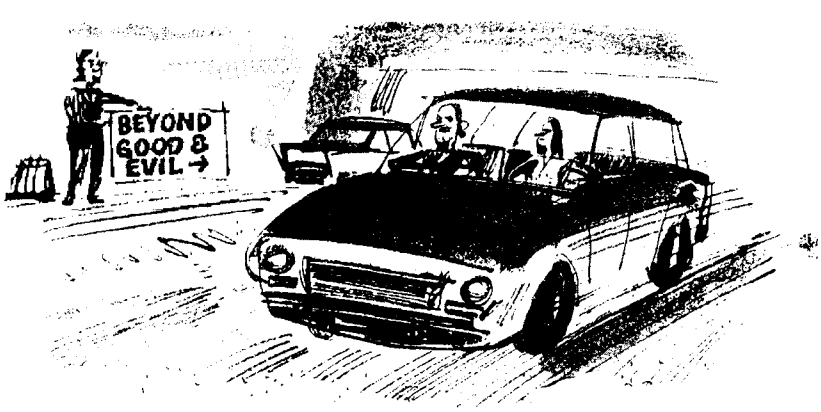
I have ever since used this passage whenever I meet devout Catholics afflicted with great suffering and who feel burdened by their image of God, afraid to remonstrate with the Almighty. But now comes Professor Nagel's fascinating, even brilliant, book to point out the passage's relevance to the world of postmodern philosophy.

Indeed, with the exception of Nagel and a few other isolated voices, it would be hard to conceive of a culture more at variance with Thomas Aquinas's view of truth than our own. Under the influence of Nietzsche and his epigones, the view has become almost dogma that "truth" is but the subjective outlook of each individual, and that any *normative* truth is merely an imposition of the dominant view. Thus, Stanley Fish claimed recently in a debate with Richard John Neuhaus in *First Things* that the rules of arithmetic had no more general validity from culture to culture than the rules of baseball or driving on the right side of the road. Nagel, however, relying on the arguments of philosophers Saul Kripke and Ronald Dworkin, insists that "classical logic [cannot] be qualified in any way, it [is] simply correct," and "the only response to alternatives such as quantum logic, for example, [is] to argue against them from within classical logic." And in any case, "the skeptics all rely on it in their own thinking."

Perhaps it is the sheer lucidity of Nagel's prose that alerts the reader to the boldness of his thesis. In any event, the author adopts a decidedly take-no-prisoners approach, explicitly opposing his position to all those trends in contemporary epistemology that mark what Willard Van Orman Quine, Nelson Goodman, Hilary Putnam (somewhat dubiously, in my opinion), Bernard Williams, Richard Rorty, and (in the standard reading) Ludwig Wittgenstein all have in common. At one point, Nagel makes bold to show his true colors by averring: "If this description sounds Cartesian or even Platonic, that is no accident."

It would be a mistake, however, to regard the book as simply one overlong, easy pot shot against the Nietzschean irrationalists. Nagel fully admits the initial plausibility of the position taken up by the postmodern pragmatists, who seem unable to attribute to reason any ultimate validity except as an evolutionary strategy of pragmatic success. Perception, after all, is inherently perspectival; and if one follows Aquinas—and all the empiricists after him—in holding that every act of knowledge begins in the senses, it becomes deeply puzzling how one might justify reason's claims to universal validity. For as Nagel says: "The essential characteristic of reason is its generality....To reason is to think systematically in ways anyone looking over my shoulder ought to be able to recognize as correct....To be rational we have to take responsibility for our thoughts while [paradoxically] denying that they are just expressions of our point of view."

These formulations make clear how daring the Platonic/Cartesian venture is in today's climate, for if there is any consensus in our post-Darwinian times, it is that we are fundamentally biological beings—and how can such vulner-



"It's not often you see a Nietzschean hitchhiker."

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able, pathetic, mortal flesh make such preposterous claims to *universality*? To which Nagel can only reply: because to claim the opposite is *also* to make a rational (that is, universally valid) claim. The following quote might seem rather long, but considering how long it took Plato to make the same point, it is admirably concise:

> Suppose, to take an extreme example, we are asked to believe that our logical and mathematical and empirical reasoning manifest historically contingent and culturally local habits of thought and have no wider validity than that. This appears on the one hand to be a thought about how things really are, and on the other hand to deny that we are capable of such thoughts. Any claim as radical and universal as that would have to be supported by a powerful argument, but the claim itself seems to leave us without the capacity for such arguments. Or is the judgment supposed to apply to itself? I believe that would leave us without the possibility of thinking anything at all.
>
> To put it schematically, the claim "Everything is subjective" must be nonsense, for it would itself have to be either subjective or objective. But it can't be objective, since in that case it would be false if true. And it can't be subjective, because then it would not rule out any objective claim, including the claim that it is objectively false. There may be some subjectivists, perhaps styling themselves as pragmatists, who present subjectivism as applying even to itself. But then it does not call for a reply, since it is just a report of what the subjectivist finds it agreeable to say. If he also invites us to join him, we need not offer any reason for declining, since he has offered us no reason to accept.
>
> Objections of this kind are as old as the hills, but they seem to require constant repetition.

Indeed, they go back as far as Plato's dialogue "The Sophist," and far from being the sophomore's *tu quoque* retort, the paradox on which the refutation of relativism rests is the very pathos and essence of being human: we are an enigmatic puddle of flesh that can encompass the whole. The reader who is reminded of Pascal at this point will be very close to Nagel's essential thesis: "How is it possible that creatures like ourselves, supplied with the contingent capacities of a biological species," Nagel asks, "whose very existence appears to be radically accidental, should have access to universally valid methods of objective thought?"

I myself happen to think this standard conundrum is not as telling as it is often taken to be. Nonetheless, the question alerts us to the basic tension between reason's universality and evolution's *ad hoc* strategies. But if Darwin and Nagel are both right (and that at least is my own working assumption), then there must be a way of reconciling them, which perhaps Daniel C. Dennett has done in his book *Darwin's Danger-*

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ous Idea when he says:

> Suppose SETI [search for extra-terrestrial intelligence] struck it rich, and established communication with intelligent beings on another planet. We would not be surprised to find that they understood and used the same arithmetic that we do. Why not? Because arithmetic is *right*. The point is clearly not restricted to arithmetic, but to all "necessary truths" — what philosophers since Plato have called *a priori* knowledge.... It has often been pointed out that Plato's curious theory of reincarnation and reminiscence, which he offers as an explanation of the source of our *a priori* knowledge, bears a striking resemblance to Darwin's theory, and this resemblance is particularly striking from our current vantage point. Darwin himself famously noted the resemblance in a remark in one of his notebooks. Commenting on the claim that Plato thought our "necessary ideas" arise from the pre-existence of the soul, Darwin wrote: "read monkeys for pre-existence."

Now whatever else Darwin or Dennett meant by these remarks, if one takes Nagel's arguments seriously, they clearly imply that the long-presumed conflict between Darwinism and Idealism has been misconceived. At one point in his *Origin of Species*, Darwin calls his book "one long argument," and if Nagel is at all correct about what is entailed in any argumentation, then Darwin is, however unbeknownst to himself, riding into the evolutionary town, Shane-like, on the Platonic pony.

Nagel's book also makes clear, once again *contra* Nietzsche, how deeply embedded in Idealist rationality is *morality*. Taking a cue from Ronald Dworkin, who holds (in Nagel's formulation) that "skeptical positions must themselves be understood as moral claims," Nagel shows how moral claims are not expressions of feeling, as the utilitarian emotivists hold, but *rational* claims with an inherent universal claim.

Nagel and Dworkin are signatories to the now-notorious *amicus curiae* "Philosophers' Brief" to the Supreme Court, which argued for a moral agnosticism about physician-assisted suicide, at least in the eyes of the Constitution. Claiming that choosing the manner and timing of one's own death is a "profoundly religious act," the six philosophers who signed the brief insisted that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment forbids any agency of government from interfering in or working against the decision of autonomous individuals freely and after due consideration to commit suicide.

My only point in raising the issue is simply to register my bafflement at the position Nagel presents in *The Last Word* with what he and Dworkin argue in the brief. How morality can—indeed *must*—be rationally generalizable and yet how society is forbidden to have *its* own "last word" is puzzling in the extreme. Nor is it enough to say that morality can have the last say but law cannot: yes, we can declare some things immoral but not illegal, like malicious gossip; but that hardly can hold for life issues like murder and *assisted* suicide, where law has a *prima facie* claim to rule, sanction, and forbid.

Here is where, I think, Thomas Aquinas can hold the key. I presume both Nagel and Dworkin would hold with Thomas that "truth does not vary according to persons; when a human being says something true, he is invincible, irrespective of the one with whom he may be disputing." But they do not then, as Thomas does, go on and identify God with the truth *tout court*, and there is the rub. Both Plato and Descartes (and after them Leibnitz even more so) knew that rationalism must be founded in God or it will have no foundation at all, otherwise the lapse into irrationalism will be inevitable. In fact Nagel, as a professed atheist, gets rather nervous at the drift of his argument here, fully admitting its theistic implication but calling it "alarming":

> The reason that I call this view alarming is that it is hard to know what world picture to associate it with, and difficult to avoid the suspicion that the picture will be religious, or quasi-religious. Rationalism has always had a more religious flavor than empiricism. Even without God, the idea of a natural sympathy between the deepest truths of nature and the deepest layers of the human mind...makes us more *at home* in the universe than is secularly comfortable. The thought that the relation between mind and the world is something fundamental makes many people in this day and age nervous.

To his credit, however, Nagel admits that the atheist resistance to rationalism in secular culture is more an authority hang-up than a reasonable conclusion from the facts of the universe; he even avers: "I believe this is one manifestation of a fear of religion which has large and often pernicious consequences for modern intellectual life." These passages make me suspect that any rationalism that tries to resist Thomas's identification of God with the truth will ultimately fail.

As the example of Nietzsche himself proves. What Nietzsche illustrates so amply is that without a foundation in God, rationalism will eventually collapse into a cult of irrationality. Alone among the legions of postmodern perspectivists, *he saw*. One can certainly appreciate Nagel's daring effort to defend rationalism; one further salutes his lucidity of style and admires his wit (at one point he calls postmodernism "theoretical chic"). But the bizarre catalogue of errors that constitutes the "Philosophers' Brief" points to a disturbing *lacuna* in Nagel's whole effort: No God, no reason; no pain, no gain. Or as Nietzsche himself put it in *The Gay Science*, in a passage rarely quoted by his postmodern grandchildren: "Even we godless antimetaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith thousands of years old, the Christian faith, which was also the faith of Plato: that God is the truth, that truth is divine." Exactly. □

Edward T. Oakes, S.J., *is associate professor of religious studies at Regis University in Denver, Colorado, and author of* Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar *(Continuum). He is currently working on a book on evolutionary theory.*

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Days and Nights on the Grand Trunk Road

Calcutta to Khyber

Anthony Weller

Marlowe & Company, $22.95, 383 pp.

Thomas Swick

The Grand Trunk Road presents a daunting prospect to the cow which wants to cross to the other side; the man who dreams of traveling from one end to the other is an exceptional being indeed. It would be difficult to find a more intimidating thoroughfare. To begin with there is its size: 1,525 miles from the Khyber Pass, at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, to the city of Calcutta on the Bay of Bengal—from landlocked mountains to the open sea. There is its history, which on the subcontinent is as much about beliefs as it is about rulers. "Four great religions," Anthony Weller points out "—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—were born and grew up along the route," which begins in one of man's most ancient crossroads, runs across land traveled by Alexander the Great, passes near the Golden Temple in Amritsar, cuts through the heart of the capital of Delhi, gives a view of the Taj Majal in Agra, gets outshone by the Ganges in Benares, before entering the infamous city of Calcutta. Chronologically, it traverses thirty-five centuries, during which it has given passage to everyone from Buddha to Kipling:...

Ho! get away, you bullock-man,
you've 'eard the bugle blowed,
There's a regiment a-comin' down
the Grand Trunk Road:

...to the refugees of partition.

And, not to be overlooked, there is its danger. Once famous for professional assassins or "thugs"—one of the many Hindi words incorporated into English—the road is now more feared as a dueling ground for rampaging trucks. Rare is the drive along the Grand Trunk Road that doesn't come across at least one accident. The route has also, through its roadside prostitutes, contributed to the spread of AIDS in India, but the already high-risk nature of their work makes the drivers fairly oblivious to the threat. What is a microscopic virus in the face of an oncoming truck?

It was with all this in mind, of course, that Weller set out on the Grand Trunk Road. He had just finished a novel, and was not heavily booked in Boston (he is a guitarist as well as a writer), and his earlier encounters with India had left him unsatisfied. "Often," he writes wisely, "the places that stay with us most, that possess our imaginations, are the ones we have failed to understand."

The Grand Trunk appeared as a road toward understanding, for it connected not only India with Pakistan but the past with the present. Here he could see "subsistence farmers living like their ancestors did three thousand years ago, while an hour's drive up the Grand Trunk Road the well-off in cities are leaving their computers.... Along the Grand Trunk Road I often had the impression that all the distinct ages of man were crowding the wayside and flourishing in its dust, sheltered by shade trees."

Weller began his journey in Calcutta, specifically choosing to go against the traditional eastward flow of merchants and invaders, and before setting off provides good historical background on the road: its origins under Aryan settlers, its paving by the British, its name referring not to the quality of luggage carried along it but to the fact that it connected all the various branch roads.

Because of restrictions against foreigners driving in India (partly as a device for keeping Indians employed), Weller hired a series of drivers. They add little to the journey in terms of color or conversation, but they do an admirable job of steering clear of trucks.

And Weller's impressive learning makes him less in need of local guides. In Parasnath, he gives insight into the Jains, who believe "in escape through enlightenment—essentially, the perfectibility of man," and are very good with numbers. At Bodh Gaya he writes a brief and lucid discourse on the division in Buddhism between those who regard Buddha as a deity and those who see him as a teacher. Much farther along, in the Punjab, he compares the first Sikh guru, Nanak, to Martin Luther King, Jr., in his efforts "to declare a path to God as ultimately available to any man and free from religious cant."

Weller has a wonderful ability—important in a travel writer—to come upon the odd bit of trivia. One wonders how many other travelers on this road would have found Lawrence Durrell's birthplace (in Jullundur) or discovered the hotel in Lahore where Claude Levi-Strauss stayed while researching *Tristes Tropiques*. He tells us, in a strange connectiveness, of the fight that the young journalist Kipling nearly had with a young civil servant named O'Dwyer, the same man who would give the order to fire at the massacre in Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919, and who, twenty years later in London, would be assassinated by one of the survivors. The Pathans of Peshawar, we learn, have gained world domination in the sport of squash, and thousands of Sikhs are members of the Lions Club because the name Singh—which all male Sikhs bear—means "lion." Of all the groups encountered on this journey, the Pathans and the Sikhs come most vividly to life.

Weller finds Pakistan less squalid and disorganized but also less sensuous than India. In Peshawar he encounters his first real drama—applying for permission to travel through the Khyber Pass—and while awaiting a response he eats dinner with an informative French journalist, visits the arms-manufacturing town of Darra, and then, finally, has a cordial and ultimately successful meeting with the deputy secretary of Home and Tribal Affairs. After all the miles of museums and temples, something is actually happening to our hero, and we realize that if this book lacks anything it is human experiences like these. The

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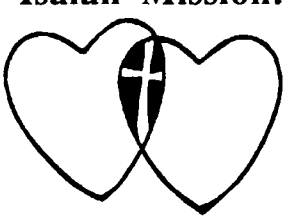

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ride up through the pass, with the obligatory bodyguard, is almost an anticlimax. Though the writing, as throughout the book, carries the moment: "I stood there looking out over the last stretch, the way out of the Khyber and the subcontinent, where so many men had walked or ridden to their doom, and asked myself what all these miles of the [Grand Trunk] added up to....All along I'd tried to see how these people were living with their profound pasts, pasts they were largely unaware of except for an inherited residue of blind emotion and mutual distrust and habitual gestures—so little wisdom passed on, after all those centuries of civilization....There was no natural drift toward better things: that was the age-old lesson of the subcontinent. The times of wisdom, the fruitful centuries, were only bumps in the road." □

Thomas Swick *is travel editor of the* Fort Lauderdale Sentinel.

Fools, Martyrs, Traitors
The Story of Martyrdom in the Western World
Lacey Baldwin Smith
Knopf, $30, 433 pp.

Tom O'Brien

Does everything come down to public relations? That is almost the suggestion of historian Lacey Baldwin Smith in his new book on martyrs. It is not irreverent, Smith asserts, to argue that a gift for political theater does not necessarily imply hypocrisy, but rather a passion to dramatize a cause worthy of one's life. A successful martyr, Smith argues, may be idealistically inspired, but is no less skilled in the art of speaking to the future.

Smith's is not a totally unified book

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but it is a highly readable one ranging over vast stretches of time and space. It reflects a rich lifetime of learning, rooted in Smith's scholarship in the Renaissance, now grown backward to Socrates and forward to Gandhi. Smith acknowledges that he is not rigidly theoretical about what constitutes martyrdom. Though not taken captive or bound by them, he is fully aware of the various theories about martyrdom—especially those that second-guess the egoism and even sensuality in *self-sacrifice*. After all, even in martyrdom the self is a large part of the equation and, as Smith notes, a kind of rich, rapt ecstasy is not uncommon in martyrs' memoirs. Think of Carthage's Saint Perpetua.

Fools, Martyrs, Traitors is the product of a course Smith taught at Northwestern University, and the course outlines are visible in the table of contents. Indeed, sometimes you feel the course boring in too hard when the author engages in repetitive comparison and contrast. Lacking a strict definition of martyrdom, Smith seems to have to stop frequently to review the variety of its forms—as if he feels the need to pull all his disparate material together in the middle of an ongoing discussion. One can easily imagine this material delighting college students today, for whom the martyr is an endangered species. Talk of martyrs is, as Monty Python might say, "something completely different."

Martyrs, Smith shows, may not always be noble (Becket was infrequently and maybe only at the last). Moreover, they are rarely sweet and they are often without honor in their own families. Many actively choose their fate; others are in large part victims (the Maccabees). Some are not seeking to change the world (Thomas More was just trying to duck) while others are bent on revising history (Joan of Arc and John Brown). A few want to do so without violence, the ultimate revision (Gandhi). The multifariousness of the book's title is apt: Smith says he can't easily typify such fierce individuals. Maybe the subtitle should read "Stories of Martyrdom."

What finally links all these fools, martyrs, and traitors? It seems that a successful martyr is someone who chooses

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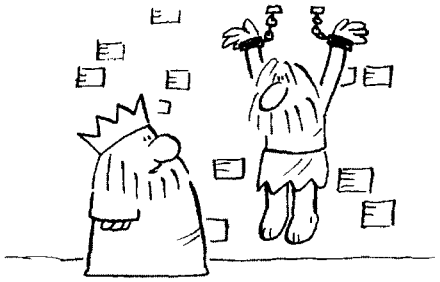

"I'd like to let you go, but the previous king threw away the key."

to value a cause above life itself, and then is "lucky" enough to have dunderheaded persecutors and talented commemorators. The Marian martyrs (Smith sure knows their lore and gore) had Foxe; Socrates lucked out not only with Plato but also the French classical painter David. The Rosenbergs, he shows, artfully promoted themselves while awaiting their cruel and needless execution, and then enticed a national intelligentsia to become their champions.

Smith's greatest spin doctor is the abolitionist John Brown. The effect of Brown's dignified approach to his own execution was profound, especially on moderates in the North. In interviews published in the *New York Herald* before his death, Brown transformed his image from that of a raving, murderous insurrectionist into quiet, courteous crusader for human rights. The South would have none of it, of course, and was propelled into paranoia and firing the first shot. As Smith observes, those whom the gods wish to destroy, they afflict with martyrs. Brown never did anything well except dying.

In one sense, Smith argues, John Brown is a prophet of things to come: the martyr turned terrorist. On the other hand, conditions for martyrdom become still more tenuous in the twentieth century. It is easier, Smith argues, to fight authoritarian than totalitarian dictatorships. With their mastery of media, Orwellian expertise in public relations, and new tools to annihilate a resistant Self such as concentration camps and mental hospitals, totalitarian regimes can more easily manipulate "history," thus eliminating any memory of their opponents. (Manipulating public opinion in a democracy is a different story. Smith is never more convincing than when detailing the way the Rosenbergs manipulated public opinion through the media.)

Given this rich and contradictory history, perhaps we need to ask ourselves what we are to make of Oklahoma City bomber Tim McVeigh. The national media often spoke in perplexed tones about McVeigh's stony-faced attitude to his jurors. Didn't he want to save his life? No, Smith might have responded, if his publishing schedule had allowed. The reason for McVeigh's behavior was straight out of the history of martyrdom: he was looking to force a death sentence, to arrange his own perverse canonization. McVeigh, please remember, thinks there could be "general uprising" any day now.

Silence can be eloquent, but stony silence, like that of McVeigh, has little power to move mountains or history. □

Tom O'Brien, Commonweal's *former movie critic, is a Washington, D.C., writer.*

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(Continued from page 4)

is patently false. It doesn't account for human error or the will of God.

As Devettere recognizes, the main issue in this discussion is morality. To suggest that any moral responsibility toward someone else is founded on *that person*'s view of what is right rather than on what God commands in Scripture is to deny the Lord's sovereignty over the life he created. Given the circumstances of her crisis, even if my mother had insisted she wanted to die and had resisted the initiation of efforts to help her breathe, I would have fought to see her life preserved. Why? Because it was my moral responsibility before God. No law, no man-made situational ethics can change that. Am I my mother's keeper? Yes, I am!

Nevertheless, I can imagine other circumstances in which it would have been not merely pointless but destructive of my mother's human dignity to continue invasive technological procedures to preserve a semblance of life. That was not the case in the episode I described, which I believe Mr. Devettere has misread. It's true, of course, that it was once routine to continue treatment beyond all reason. My experience and my reading suggest that the pendulum has now swung in the other direction, so that in serious crises some medical personnel are all too ready to get things over with, and to feel that they've done the right and ethical thing.

With Mr. Devettere, then, I would grant that physical survival is not the highest of all values, while adding that any Christian hierarchy of values must respect and incorporate the Word of God, and therefore the many scriptural injunctions to choose life over death. "There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death" (Prov. 14:12). We must also be mindful of the salvific power of accepted suffering. As a hospice volunteer I have kept watch at the bedsides of several trusted friends. For both the living and the dying, obedient perseverance to the end can be a transforming experience (Rom. 5: 3-4). Whether debating euthanasia, assisted suicide, abortion, or any other attack on a life sanctified by God in Christ, we must not be deceived.

LESLIE GOERNER

From the editors: We regret that we failed to note and correct the erroneous description of the "DNR" directive in Ms. Goerner's manuscript. As should now be clear, Ms. Goerner was referring to advance directives that authorize withholding or withdrawal of treatment in certain circumstances. These directives are based on ethical guidelines that have developed in response to the ability of modern medicine to keep patients alive for lengthy periods through the use of extraordinary means. Longtime *Commonweal* readers will recall that the journal has acknowledged and helped to expound Catholic teaching that recognizes a clear distinction between causing death and allowing death to happen. As this exchange exemplifies, however, applying these guidelines is no simple matter.

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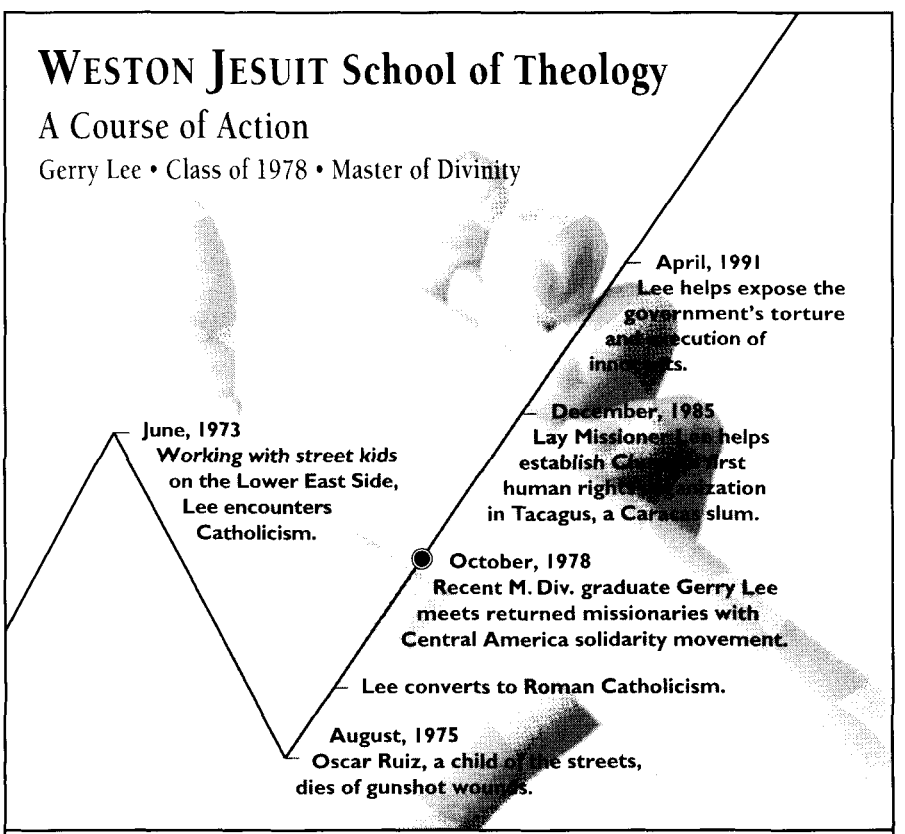
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SPARE ME THE DETAILS

Katharine Byrne

Everyone knows the penguin story—the one about the child who thought he would like to know more about penguins. He approached the librarian, who helpfully presented the boy with a book she knew he would enjoy. But after spending some time with it, the boy returned the book with the complaint: "It told me more about penguins than I wanted to know."

I find myself often in the position of that librarian: anxious to offer more than is asked for; to present a veritable feast to someone who wants no more than a snack; to enhance a story, to embellish a recipe. It is not easy for me to confine myself to the prescribed ingredients right there on the index card pinned to the kitchen curtain above my work space. If the recipe concludes with "add one-half teaspoon of oregano," why not cut up some fresh basil, throw in a few sprigs of cilantro? Wouldn't this zucchini and a few cherry tomatoes add interest to the mixture? Someone familiar with the recipe may ask, "What's in this, Kate?"

I am not, I hope, like the neighbor who, when asked, "How are you?" answers the question explicitly, discursively, and at length, assuming that you really want to know. But sometimes I wonder.

Long ago, when our first male child achieved the age appropriate for this now-dated rite of passage, I was called upon to listen to his faltering recital of altar-boy Latin. A couple of his sisters, of course, hung around the edges of this project, each one confident that if the unlikely opportunity should present itself, she could do a better job.

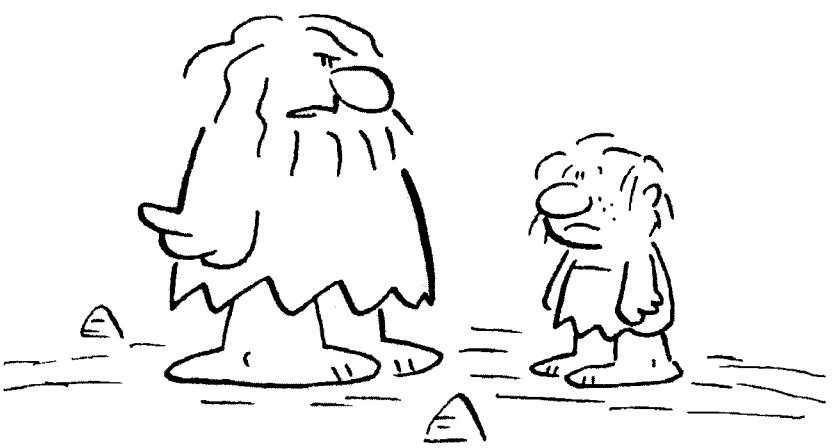
Predictably, I attacked the problem with more enthusiasm than the candidate. *Deus*, I wanted him to know, is in the nominative case. In *ad deum* you have the accusative, the object of a preposition, while *dei*, in the next line, is the genitive form. It means "of God."

"Please, Mom," he begged, "don't tell me all that stuff. I just have to learn it. I don't have to know what it means. He says we have to know the first three pages by Friday." I knew who "he" was, and thereafter confined myself to the text. But it wasn't easy to confine my urge to tell my son about that lovely word *omnipotens*, and to point out that the only Greek surviving in the Latin liturgy was *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison.*

Thirty-five years later, one of this child's children, a ten-year-old girl, called me with questions I have been hearing from grandchildren all over the country. A national genealogical urge has hit the middle schools: the pursuit of one's roots; finding the names and nationalities of remote ancestors. So far I have heard the same request from Highland Park and Park Ridge locally, and from as far away as Dallas and Nashville. Now it was young Margaret Katharine who needed to fill in some blanks on her family tree. She wanted to know the name and nationality of my father, one of her great-grandparents.

And I really warmed to the task, you might say. "His obituary," I told her, "called him James N. Mann, but that was not his real name, which had, at my mother's insistence (she had a great number of ancestors buried in the Baltimore cemetery, and none of them had a Greek name), undergone a series of reductions. At first she cut his name to Manousos, then to Manos, and finally to the irreducible Mann. But his real name, Margaret, was Demetrius Nicholas Manousopoulos. He was born in a little village near Sparta, called Chrysefa. Do you want me to spell any of that?"

There was a long pause. Finally, "Kate," she said patiently, "I have only a very small space to fill in on this branch of the family tree I have to make. I will just have to call him, 'Great-grandfather M., Greek.'"



"You don't know how lucky you are—Why, when I was your age, my father didn't even know how to talk."

Katharine Byrne *writes from Chicago.*

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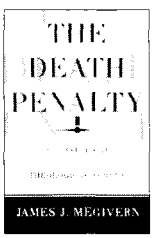

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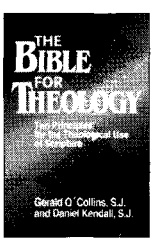

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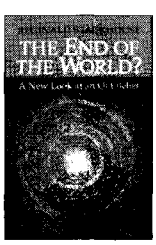

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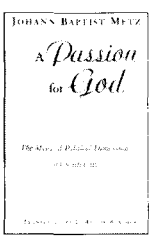

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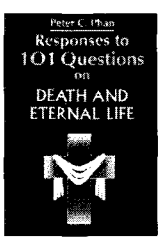

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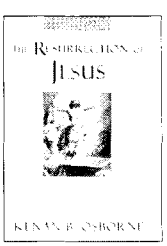

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